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# SACRED BIOGRAPHY

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## HISTORY of the PATRIAL

which is added

THE

## History of David King

A BIBLE

COURSE OF REVELATION

BAPTIST CHURCH London Wall

BY HENRY HUNTER, D.D.

IN THE AMERICAN EDITION

COMPILED IN SIX VOLUMES

Vol. I

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SACRED BIOGRAPHY:  
OR, THE  
HISTORY OF THE PATRIARCHS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

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Jam: Miller.

History of *Deborah, Ruth, and Hannah.*

BEING A  
COURSE OF LECTURES

DELIVERED AT THE

SCOTS CHURCH, LONDON WALL.

By HENRY HUNTER, D. D.



The First American Edition.

COMPLETE IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

*Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.—JOHN viii. 58.*

*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.—REVELATION i. 8.*

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## SACRED BIOGRAPHY.

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### LECTURE I.

ROMANS XV. 4.

*For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

**V**ARIOUS methods have been employed, at different periods, and by different persons, to convey useful knowledge to mankind. The knowledge most useful and most important to man, is that of morals and religion. These sciences not only afford the most pleasant and elevating subjects of meditation, but evidently possess a very powerful influence over human happiness, both in the life which now is, and in that which is to come.

The principles of morality and religion have, by some, been delivered in short, plain, and significant sentences; and have been left to produce their effect, by their own weight and evidence. Public teachers have, at other times, taken pains to explain and enforce

force these principles ; have demonstrated their reasonableness and utility ; and have exhibited the criminality, the danger, and the misery, of neglecting or transgressing them. The charms and graces of poetry have been employed to set off the native, modest beauties of truth and virtue, and allegory has spread her veil over them, in order to stimulate our ardour in the pursuit, and to heighten our pleasure in the discovery. The penetration of genius, the enchantment of eloquence, and the creative energy of fancy, have successively lent their aid to those gentle guides of human life, those condescending ministers to human comfort.

The historic page, that faithful and true witness, has been unfolded. Ages and generations elapsed and gone, have been made to pass in review ; and the lessons of religion and virtue have been forcibly inculcated, by a fair and impartial disclosure of the effects, which the observance or neglect of them have produced on the affairs of men. And the pencil of history has enriched the canvas, not only with men in groups, but selecting distinguished individuals, delineating them in their just proportions, and enlivening them with the colours of nature, has exhibited a collection of striking portraits, for our entertainment and instruction. In contemplating these we seem to expatiate in a vast gallery of family pictures, and take delight in observing and comparing the various features of the extensive kindred, as they resemble or differ from each other ; and through the physiognomy piercing into the heart, we find them, though dead, yet speaking and pleasing companions.

The holy scriptures possess an acknowledged superiority over all other writings, in all the different kinds of literary composition ; and in none more, than in that species of historical composition, which is called **BIOGRAPHY**, or a delineation of the fortunes, character and conduct of particular persons : and that, whether the historians be themselves the men whom

they

they describe and record ; or whether, from proper sources of information, they record the lives and actions of others.

These Lectures, undertaken at your request, and humbly submitted to your candid and patient attention ; and, permit me to add, intended for your religious instruction and improvement, will, through the help of God, present you with a course of SACRED BIOGRAPHY, that is, the more particular and detached history of the lives of those eminent and distinguished personages, whom Providence raised up, and whom the Holy Spirit has in the scriptures of truth represented, either as patterns for us to imitate, or as objects of disesteem and aversion. We shall endeavour to compare together those which possess more obvious and striking marks of resemblance or of dissimilitude ; and they shall be brought, one after another, into comparison with that pure and perfect example of all excellence, which was exhibited by Him, who is “ holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.”

Happy will your Lecturer esteem himself, if he shall in any measure attain, what he ardently desires, the power of blending profit with delight, for your use ; the power with which the lively oracles of God furnish him, that of rendering the errors and the vices, as well as the wisdom and the virtue of others, beneficial unto you.

In order to justify the design, for we presume not to answer for the execution, we shall endeavour to shew the propriety and usefulness of this mode of instruction in general, and the peculiar advantages which the sacred writers enjoy, in thus communicating useful knowledge ; and which we of course possess, in the diligent and attentive perusal of their writings : and this shall serve as an Introductory Lecture to the Course.

We begin with attempting to shew the propriety and usefulness of conveying instruction, by means of

the historical representation of the character and conduct of individuals, as opposed to the object of general history.

Now the professed purpose of all history is, without fear or favour, without partiality or prejudice, to represent men and things as they really are—that goodness may receive its just tribute of praise, and vice meet its deserved censure and condemnation. It is evident, that this end is most easily and most certainly attained, when our attention is confined to one particular object, or to a few at most. This may be judged of by the feelings and operations of the mind, in the contemplation of other objects.

When, from the summit of some lofty mountain, we survey the wide extended landscape; though highly delighted, we feel ourselves bewildered, and overwhelmed, by the profusion and variety of beauties which nature spreads around us. But when we enter into the detail of nature; when we attend the footsteps of a friend through some favoured, beautiful spot, which the eye and the mind can take in at once; feeling ourselves at ease, with undivided, undistracted attention we contemplate the whole; we examine and arrange the parts; the imagination is indeed less expanded, but the heart is more gratified; our pleasure is less violent and tumultuous, but it is more intense, more complete, and continues much longer; what is lost in respect of sublimity, is gained in perspicuity, force, and duration.

Take another instance:—The starry heavens present a prospect equally agreeable to every eye. The delights of a calm, serene evening, are as much relished by the simple and unlettered, as by the philosopher. But who will compare the vague admiration of the child or the clown with the scientific joy of the astronomer, who can reduce into order, what to the untutored eye is involved in confusion; who can trace the path of each little star; and, from their past appearances, can calculate, to an instant of time, their future oppositions and conjunctions? Once

Once more :—It is highly gratifying to find ourselves in the midst of a public assembly of agreeable people of both sexes, and to partake of the general cheerfulness and benevolence. But what are the cheerfulness and benevolence of a public assembly, compared to the endearments of friendship, and the meltings of love ? To enjoy these, we must retire from the crowd, and have recourse to the individual. In like manner, whatever satisfaction and improvement may be derived from general histories of mankind, which we would not be thought by any means to depreciate ; yet the history of particular persons, if executed with fidelity and skill, while it exercises the judgment less severely, so it fixes down the attention more closely, and makes its way more directly and more forcibly to the heart.

To those who are acquainted with this kind of writing, much need not be said, to evince the superior excellency of the sacred penmen. Biographers merely human necessarily lie under many disadvantages, and are liable to many mistakes. The lapse of time is incessantly thickening the veil which is spread over remote persons and events. The materials of history lie buried, confounded, dispersed, among the ruins of antiquity ; and cannot be easily distinguished and separated, even by the eye of discernment, and the hand of honesty, from the rubbish of fiction. And as they are not always furnished by truth and nature, so neither are they always selected with judgment, nor employed with taste and discretion.

Men, who only see the outside, must of necessity infer the principles of human actions from the actions themselves. And yet no rule of judgment is more erroneous : for experience assures us, that many, perhaps the greater part of our actions, are not the result of design, and are not founded on principle, but are produced by the concourse of incidents which we could not foresee, and proceed from passions kindled at the moment.

Besides,

Besides, every man fits down to write, whether of ages past, or of the present, of characters near or remote, with a bias upon his mind ; and this he naturally endeavours to communicate to his reader. All men have their favourite periods, causes, characters ; which, of course, they strive, at any rate, to embellish, to support, to recommend. They are equally subject to antipathies on the other hand, under the influence of which, they as naturally strive to depress, to expose, and to censure, what they dislike. And as men write and speak, so they read and hear, under the influence of prejudice and passion. Where the historian's opinions coincide with our own, we cheerfully allow him to be in the right ; when they differ, without hesitation we pronounce him to be mistaken.

Most of the writers of profane ancient history are chargeable with an absurdity, which greatly discredits the facts they relate, and reduces their works almost to the level of fable. They attempt too much ; they must needs account for every thing ; they conjecture when light fails them ; and because it is probable or certain that eminent men employed eloquence on important public occasions, their historians at the distance of many centuries, without record, or written document of any kind whatever, have, from the ample store of a fertile imagination, furnished posterity with the elaborate harangues of generals, statesmen, and kings. These, it is acknowledged, are among the most ingenious, beautiful, and interesting of the traces of antiquity which they have transmitted to us : what man of taste could bear to think of stripping these elegant performances of one of their chief excellencies ? But truth is always injured, by every the slightest connexion with fable. The moment I begin to read one of the animated speeches of a hero or a senator, which were never composed, delivered, or written, till the historian arose, I feel myself instantly transported from the real theatre of human life, into a fairy region : I am agreeably amused, nay, delighted ; but the sacred impreſſ

impress of truth is rendered fainter and feebler to my mind ; and when I lay down the book, it is not the fire and address of the speaker, but the skill and ingenuity of the writer that I admire. Modern history, more correct, and faithful than ancient, has fallen, however, into an absurdity not much less censurable. I mean that fanciful delineation of character, with which the account of certain periods, and the lives of distinguished personages, commonly conclude ; in which we often find a bold hypothesis hazarded for the sake of a point ; and a strong feature added to, or taken away from a character, merely to help the author to round his period.

Finally, a great part of profane history is altogether uninteresting to the bulk of mankind. The events recorded are removed to a vast distance, and have entirely spent their force. The actors exhibited are either too lofty to admit of our approach, with any interest or satisfaction to ourselves ; too brutal to be considered without disgust, or too low to be worthy of our regard. The very scenes of action are become inaccessible or unknown ; are altered, obliterated, or disregarded. Where Alexander conquered, and how Cæsar fell, are to us mere nothings.

But on opening the sacred volume, all these obstructions in the way of knowledge, of truth, of pleasure, and of improvement, instantly disappear. Length of duration can oppose no cloud to that intelligence, with which “a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years.” The human heart is there unfolded to our view, by Him, “who knows what is in man,” and “whose eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.” The men and the events therein represented are universally and perpetually interesting, for they are blended with “the things which accompany salvation,” and affect our everlasting peace. There, the writers, whether they speak of themselves or of other men, are continually under the direction of the Spirit of all truth and wisdom.

These

These venerable men, though subject to like passions with others, there, speak not of themselves, but from God ; “ for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man ; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.\* And all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”†

Having premised these things, we will proceed next Lord’s day, if God permit, to the execution of our plan ; and shall begin, as the order both of nature and of scripture prescribe, with the history of Adam, the venerable father and founder of the human race.

Men, Brethren, and Fathers, we are about to study the lives of other men ; but it concerns us much more to look well to our own. Our forefathers were ; we are. The curtain has dropped, and has hid ages and generations past from our eyes. Our little scene is going on ; and must likewise speedily close. We are not indeed, perhaps, furnishing materials for history. When we die, obscurity will probably spread the veil of oblivion over us. But let it be ever remembered by all, that every man’s life is of importance to himself, to his family, to his friends, to his country, and in the sight of God. They are by no means the best men, who have made most noise in the world ; neither are those actions most deserving of praise, which have obtained the greatest share of fame. Scenes of violence and blood ; the workings of ambition, pride and revenge, compose the annals of men. But piety and purity, temperance and humility, which are little noticed and soon forgotten of the world, are held in everlasting remembrance before God. And happy had it been for many of those, whose names and deeds have been transmitted to us with renown, if they had never been born.

One corruption subdued is a victory infinitely more desirable, and more truly honourable, than a triumph

\* 2 Peter i. 21.

gained

† 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

gained amidst the confused noise of ten thousand warriors, and as many garments rolled in blood; for “ he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty : and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.”\* Remember, my friends, that to be a child of God is far more honourable than to be descended from kings ; and that a christian is a much higher character than a hero. And let this consideration influence all that you undertake, all that you do. Act as if the eyes of Cato were always upon you, was the precept given, and the motive urged, to the Roman youth, in order to excel in virtue. The eyes of God are in truth continually upon you. Live then as in his sight ; and knowing that every action as it is performed, every word as it is spoken, and every thought as it arises, is recorded in the book of God’s remembrance, and must come into judgment, “ keep thy heart with all diligence,” set a watch on the door of thy lips, “ and whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

We are about to review ages past, and to converse with men long since dead. And the period is fast approaching, when time itself shall be swallowed up ; when Adam and his youngest son shall be contemporaries ; when the mystery of providence shall be cleared up, the mystery of grace finished, and the ways of God fully vindicated to men. In the humble and solemn expectation of that great event, knowing and believing the scriptures, and the power of God, let us study to live a life of faith and holiness upon the Son of God ; “ redeeming the time, because the days are evil,” and “ working out our own salvation with fear and trembling.” And may the God of our fathers be our God and the God of our offspring, and conduct us through the dangerous and difficult paths of human life, and through the valley of the shadow of death, to his own “ presence, where there is fulness of joy, and to his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.” Amen.

\* Prov. xvi. 32.



# History of Adam.

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## L E C T U R E II.

GENESIS V. 5.

*And all the days that Adam lived, were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.*

IF to trace the origin of particular nations ; if to mark, and to account for, the rise and progress of empire, the revolutions of states, the discovery of new worlds, be an interesting, pleasant, and useful exercise of the human mind ; how amusing, interesting, and instructive must it be, to trace HUMAN NATURE itself up to its source ! Placed beneath the throne of God, it is pleasing to observe how the heavens and the earth took their beginning ; and by what means this globe was at first peopled, and continues to be filled with men. If there be a natural, and not illaudable propensity, in individuals, to dive into the pedigree of their families ; and in nations, to fix that of their princes, heroes and legislators ; is it possible to want curiosity, or to miss entertainment, when the history of the venerable Father of all Men is presented to our attention—that of Adam, to whom we feel ourselves closely allied by condition and by blood, however unconnected we may seem to be with most of the collateral branches of the family ; of whose nature we all partake ; by whose conduct we are all affected, and in the consequences of whose actions we are all to this day involved ?

In pursuing this important inquiry, we have God himself for our guide, and we plunge into the dark regions

regions of the remotest antiquity, lighted by that gracious SPIRIT, to whom all nature stands confessed, and with whom the whole extent of time is a single point, an unchanging now.

God having framed and fitted up this vast fabric, this magnificent palace, the earth, worthy of the inhabitant whom he designed to occupy it, and worthy of himself; having formed, arranged, and fructified the various and innumerable vegetable and animal tribes; having created, suspended, and balanced the greater and the lesser lights, and settled the economy of the whole host of heaven; at length, with all the solemnity and majesty of Deity, as with the maturity of deliberation, as with a peculiar effort of divine power and skill, he designs and produces ADAM, the first of men. When the earth is to be fashioned, and the ocean to be poured into its appointed bed; when the firmament is to be expanded, and suns to be lighted up, God says, *Let them be*, and they are created. But when MAN is to be made, the creating Power seems to make a solemn pause, retires within himself, looks for a model by which to frame this exquisite piece of workmanship, and finds it in himself. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them."\*

Thus then was brought into existence, the father and founder of the human race. "And O, how fair must that form have been, which the fingers of God framed, without the intervention of a second cause! How capacious that soul which the breath of God immediately inspired! But glorious and perfect as he is, Adam, upon his very first reflection, feels himself a dependent and a limited being. No sooner has his

eye

\* Gen. i. 26, 27.

eye ascended to God who made him, than it returns to the earth from whence he was taken ; and the very first excursion of reason informs him that he is at the disposal of another, and restrained by a law. He receives a whole globe, over which he is permitted an unlimited sovereignty ; but one tree is reserved, as a token of his subjection. Every plant in paradise offers itself to gratify his sense, every animal does homage at his feet ; but the sight of one kind of fruit in the midst of the garden continually reminds him, that he himself is dependent upon, and accountable to God ; and while six parts of time are allowed for his own employments and delights, the seventh is set apart, sacred to his Maker.

Behold him then taking possession of his fair inheritance, of his vast empire, in all the majesty of unclouded reason, all the beauty of perfect innocence ; possessed of every bodily, of every mental endowment. His numerous vassals of the brute creation present themselves before him : at one glance he discovers their nature and qualities, and gives them suitable names. But, while he is invested in the property of a world, he receives it as a charge for which he is to be responsible : “ The Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to *keep* it ; ” and he, for whom God and nature had produced all things in a luxuriant abundance, has nevertheless employment assigned him ; he is placed in the garden to *dress* it. And can any of his degenerate sons then dream of independent property ; or reckon want of employment to be an honourable distinction ?

Behold him accepting his charge with submission and gratitude ; entering on his employment with alacrity and joy ; surveying his ample portion with complacency and delight. The prosecution of his pleasant task unfolds to him still new wonders of divine power and skill. The flower, and the shrub, and the tree, disclose their virtues, uses, and ends, to his observing eye. Every beast of the field spontaneously ministers

ministers to his pleasure or his advantage ; all the host of heaven stands revealed to his capacious soul ; and God himself, the great Lord of all, delights in him, and converses with him as a father and a friend.

But yet he is alone ; and therefore, even in paradise, but half blessed. The exulting heart of man pants for communication of satisfaction, and the rich profusion of Eden is but half relished and enjoyed, because there is no partaker with him. Being corporeal and earthly, he is unfit for the society of pure spirits ; being rational and divine, he is above the society of the most sagacious of the subject tribes. “ For Adam,” in the wide extended creation, “ there was not found an help meet for him.” But no sooner is the want felt, than it is supplied. God, who does nothing imperfectly, at length makes the happiness of paradise complete, and fills up the measure of Adam’s joy. “ And the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept : and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib which the Lord had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.”\*

What an important era in the life of Adam ! What a new display of the Creator’s power, and skill, and goodness ! How must the spirit of devotion be heightened, now that man could join in *social* worship ! What additional satisfaction in contemplating the frame, order, and course of nature, now that he possessed the most exalted of human joys, that of conveying knowledge to a beloved object ! Now that he can instruct Eve in the wonders of creation, and unfold to her their Maker’s nature, perfections, and will ! What a new flavour have the fruits which grow in the garden of God acquired, now that they are gathered by the hand of conjugal affection, and recommended to the taste by the smile of complacency and love !—Ah ! why were not joys like these permanent as they were pure ? Was bliss like this bestow-

\* Gen. ii. 21, 22.

ed but to be blasted? And must Adam's chief felicity issue in his ruin?

We are reluctantly brought forward to that awful revolution, which at length took place in Adam's condition and character. Of the duration of his innocence and happiness we have no account. His history now becomes blended with that of the wicked and malignant spirit, who had "left his first estate" of holiness and felicity: and who, having artfully seduced our first parents from their innocence, exposed them to the wrath of God, procured their expulsion from paradise, rendered them a prey to fear, shame, and remorse, and subjected them to pain, disease and death.

The circumstances of the case, according to the scripture account of it, were these. The devil observed the serpent to be an animal of peculiar sagacity and penetration, and fixes on him as a fit instrument of seduction. Fearing a repulse from the superior firmness and discernment of the man, he watches for, and finds the unhappy moment, when the woman, being separated from her husband, opposed to his wiles inferior powers of reason and intelligence, with greater softness and pliancy. He addresses himself to a principle in her nature, the immoderate indulgence of which has proved fatal to so many thousands of her daughters, *curiosity*; curiosity, the investigator of truth, the mother of invention; curiosity, the prompter to rashness, the parent of danger, the guide to ruin. Having first gained her attention, he excites her to doubt and to reason in the face of a positive command; rouses in her a spirit of pride and ambition; and at length persuades her to make the fatal experiment. She eats of the prohibited tree, and, by transgression, acquires the knowledge of *evil*, whereas she had hitherto known only *good*.

By what arguments Adam was prevailed upon to become a partner of her guilt, we are not informed. From the apology he made for his conduct, it is to be inferred

inferred that female insinuation and address misled him from the law of his God. And thus were both ruined by the operation of principles in themselfes good and useful ; but carried to excess, unchecked by reason, unawed by religion. Eve perished by a curious and ambitious desire after a condition, for which God and nature had not designed her, a desire to be “as God, to know good and evil ;” Adam fell by complaisance to his wife, carried to unmanly weakness and compliance, yielding to his subject, bidding defiance to his sovereign.

And what words can express, what heart can conceive the bitter change ! All his posterity have experienced the melancholy transition from health to sickness, from ease to pain : very many have passed from affluence to indigence, from glory to shame, and not a few have exchanged empire itself for banishment or a dungeon. But more than the accumulated weight of all these at once, falls on the devoted head of our guilty first father. The eyes, which before met the approach of God with rapture, now are clouded with sorrow, tremble with fear, or strain with remorse and horror, at the voice of the Almighty. That tongue which was once tuned only to the accent and the language of love has in a moment learned to reproach and upbraid. The heart which glowed at the promise and the prospect of a fair, numerous, and happy progeny, now sinks in dejection at the dismal apprehension of that guilt and woe, in which his folly had plunged all his hapless children. Where innocence sat enthroned, there fell despair broods over her own stinging reflections, and tormenting fears. Above, the awful throne of an offended God ; beneath, a fathomless gulf, kindled by the breath of Jehovah as a stream of brimstone ; within, a troubled conscience, like the raging sea, incapable of taking rest. “The glory is departed : the gold is become dim, and the most fine gold changed.”

And

And now too a revolution in outward circumstances takes place, corresponding to that which had passed on his internal constitution and character. Adam must no longer possess that paradise of which he had rendered himself unworthy. Justice drives out from Eden the man, who had cast himself out from the favour of God. A wall reaching up to heaven, and immoveable as the decree of the Eternal, prevents the possibility of return. The flaming sword of the cherubim bars all access to the tree of life. His labour, formerly his delight, must henceforward be accompanied with pain. The subject tribes throw off their allegiance, and either shun, or threaten their Lord. The elements change their influence, and his fair domain becomes a vast solitude. The sole partner of his former joys, now become the cause and the companion of his guilt, becomes also the companion of his woe. Mutual reflections and reproaches embitter and increase their common misery ; and stern death stares them in the face.

But will God contend forever, will he be always wroth ? Then “ the spirit should fail before him, and the souls which he had made.” Behold a dawn of hope arises, and the promise of the Most High saves from despair. The moment man becomes, and feels himself, a miserable offender, that moment is the gospel preached unto him ; as the woman was first in the transgression, so from her the prospect of salvation arises ; and it is declared that “ the old serpent, who is the devil and Satan,” who had in deceiving her, destroyed her posterity, should by one who was peculiarly her posterity, be destroyed and slain. Thus they leave Eden, supported and cheered with the expectation of triumph over their bitter enemy, and of being restored at length to the favour of their offended God. To keep alive this hope, as well as to afford present relief from shame, at this period, it would appear, sacrifice was instituted. The same victim shed its blood, the type of atonement ; and furnished its

skin to clothe the naked, thereby presented the emblem of a perfect righteousness, to cover and shelter the naked soul. And thus early, distinctly and unequivocally was Christianity taught to mankind.

In process of time, however, Adam has the felicity of becoming a father; and enjoys the satisfaction of seeing the blessing pronounced upon him in his better state, notwithstanding his apostacy, taking effect. Eve becomes the joyful mother, perhaps at one birth, of two sons, and the earth begins to be replenished. Behold the first parents of mankind exulting in affections unknown, unfelt before; exulting in this fresh proof that God had not forgotten to be gracious. Behold the nuptial tie strengthened and confirmed; the voice of upbraiding and reproach turned to the language of gratulation, complacency, and love.

Adam observes, with growing delight, his sons increasing in stature and wisdom. Stung with keen reflection upon the happiness which he had vilely thrown away, and the misery which he had entailed upon his hapless children, how would he exert himself to repair that loss! How forcibly inculcate, by his own fatal example, the obligations of God's holy law! With what gratitude lead them to the promised atonement! With what heartfelt delight infuse knowledge into their opening minds!

Man is destined to labour from the beginning; and, for his punishment, guilty man must labour with the sweat of his brow. But all the punishments of Heaven in reality, and in the issue, are blessings. It is the privilege and the happiness of Adam and all his sons to be employed, though to weariness and fatigue. Accordingly the heirs and possessors of the whole globe, as soon as they arrive at man's estate, betake themselves to the humble and necessary occupations of that simple state of human nature. "Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain was a tiller of the ground."

But Adam, we find, has taught his sons to blend religion with their secular employments; nay, to make their

their very employments the monitors and the means of religious worship. "In process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof ; and the Lord had respect to Abel, and to his offering ; but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect."\* And O, how early did the different passions and affections of the human mind discover themselves ! Abel brings with his offering an humble, pious, and believing spirit. Cain approaches the altar of God with a proud, selfish, murderous heart. And melancholy it is to observe, the first quarrel in the world, the first human blood that was shed, were occasioned by religion, which is designed of God to be, and is in itself, the dearest bond of union among men.

An event now took place in Adam's family by which every former grief must have been renewed and embittered ; and to his inexpressible mortification he finds himself a root of bitterness, of which all his branches must and do partake. Cain, incensed at the preference given to his brother's offering, burning with envy and resentment, watches his opportunity, and finding himself alone with him in the field, puts Abel to death. Thus man becomes the executioner of the dreadful sentence of the divine law, upon man—brother upon brother. What must have been the emotions of Adam's soul when these sad news were brought him ! To lose a son, a pious promising son : almost an only one ; prematurely, unexpectedly, by the hand of his own brother ! The one dead ! the other worse than dead ; a wretch unworthy to live ! How would his own transgression again stare him in the face ! How would he again accuse himself as the author of his own wretchedness, and the propagator of woe on woe to his posterity ! The empire of Satan over this miserable world would now seem confirmed ; and the purpose of the divine

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grace

\* Gen. iv. 4, 5.

grace would be apparently defeated. But God yet takes pity on fallen guilty man, being mindful of his promise ; and Seth is given to supply the loss of Abel —Seth, in whose line the promise runs, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ should come. And thus the divine interpositions always seasonably and suitably meet our necessities and wants.

Adam's own forfeited life is prolonged to many generations, and he lives to see his posterity increased to a great multitude, inventing and cultivating the arts which support, adorn, or comfort life. But the time approaches, at last, that he must die. Mercy flew as on the wings of a dove to his relief ; justice walks with slow and steady steps to his punishment. By himself sin had entered into the world, and death must inevitably follow, and pass upon him and upon all men. He had seen the ghastly appearance of death, in the person of his murdered son ; he must now drink the bitter cup for himself : “ And the days that Adam lived, were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.”

This is the end of all men, and the living should lay it to his heart. And thus at length decayed the fabric which God himself had reared ; thus “ the dust returned to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God who gave it.” And thus must conclude the history of every life, though protracted to a thousand years, whether adorned with virtues, or sullied with vice, whether passed with noise on the great theatre, or obscurely spent in the shade. To this complexion the wise and the beautiful, the brave and the good, as well as the simple and the homely, the timid and the vicious, must come at last. “ Here the rich and the poor meet together ; here the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.”

The next Lecture, if God permit, will attempt to exhibit to you, the comparison and contrast of the first and second Adam : in the former of whom all died ; and by the latter, an elect world is made alive, and

and “ raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

Let us endeavour to improve what has been said ; by learning habitually to acknowledge, adore, and serve the great Author and Preserver of our being, who has lavished so much goodness upon us ; who adorned our nature with his own glorious image, pitied us in our low and lost estate, and has laid help for us on one who is mighty to save : and who, by the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, is aiming at making us partakers of a divine nature, and delivering us from that bondage of corruption, in which we are sunk by reason of sin.

Let us learn, secondly, from the sad example of the first transgression, to rest contented with that state and condition which Providence has assigned us in life ; to use only lawful means for bettering it ; to make the known will of God the only rule of conduct ; never to reason and tamper with temptation ; but to repel or flee from it at once : and to shun those as our worst enemies, who, on any occasion or pretence, would attempt to make us think lightly of the law of God.

Let me take occasion, thirdly, from that institution which God designed for the completion of human happiness in a state of innocence, and for the mutual assistance and comfort of the sexes, in their fallen condition, to censure and condemn that spirit and practice of celibacy, which is one of the crying vices of our own age and country, and which is equally inimical to religion, to good morals, to public spirit, and human comfort. He who says, or lives as if he thought, that it is “ good for man to be alone,” gives the lie to his Maker ; sins against the constitution of his nature, dishonours his parents ; defrauds another of one of the justest rights of humanity, and in a case too where it is impossible so much as to complain ; and exposes himself to commit offences against society which are not to be mentioned in this place. In truth,

truth, celibacy is a vile compound of avarice and selfishness, which would fain pass upon the world for prudence and self denial ; and the state of our own country at present, in this respect, looks as if a single state, as in Roman Catholic countries, were established by a law, but that the laity, not the clergy, were bound by it. But, alas ! I am only furnishing matter for a little conversation. There must be more virtue, religion, and good sense among the young men of the age, before this crying evil be remedied.

Finally, let us take the conclusion of the book of God, and the bright prospect which it discloses to our view, to support and cherish us under the melancholy scene exhibited to us in the beginning of it. " According to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." " And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new."\* " And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month : and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse ; but the throne of God, and of the Lamb, shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him. And they shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun : for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign forever."† " I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands ; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about

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\* Rev. xxi. 5.

Rev. xxii. 1—5.

the elders, and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God ; saying, Amen : blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might be unto our God forever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes ? And whence came they ? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat ; for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” \*

Thus the mercy of God, and the blood of the Lamb, remove the guilt, and rectify the disorders of sin. Thus guilty fallen man is recovered and restored. Thus the evils recorded in the first pages of the Bible, are remedied and done away in that bright revelation of a world to come, which is opened to us in the close of it. Thus is Adam, and his renewed offspring, conducted from a terrestrial paradise, where the tree of knowledge of good and evil grew up among the trees of life, to the paradise of God, where no mixture of evil intrudes itself, where none but the trees of life find a place. And thus the several parts of divine revelation explain, illustrate, strengthen, and confirm each other ; and the whole taken together exhibiting throughout one great leading object, carrying on one great design, and accomplishing, at length, the one original purpose of the ETERNAL, is gloriously perfect.

\* Rev. vii. 9—17.

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# Adam and Christ compared.

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## LECTURE III.

I CORINTHIANS XV. 45.

*And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.*

THE frame of nature, the ways of Providence, and the work of redemption, mutually illuminate, explain, and support each other. The invisible things of God are clearly understood by the things which are made ; the world is evidently upheld and governed by him who made it at first ; and the suspension of the laws of nature, and the special interpositions of Divine Providence, constitute the proof, that the gospel dispensation is from Him who has the universe under his control, to continue or to change its appearance at his pleasure ; who has all hearts in his hand, and consequently, all events at his disposal. When we attempt to contemplate the providence of God, we immediately find it to be a system infinitely too vast for human capacity to take in, too complex for our penetration to unfold, too deep and mysterious for our understanding to fathom. All that we can do is to consider the detached parts of this majestic whole, as they present themselves to our senses, or to our reason ; as they are transmitted to us in the history and experience of others ; or as they are discovered to us by a revelation from heaven. Without the bible, it were utterly impossible to give a tolerable account, much less one completely satisfactory, of the origin of the world, or of the appearances of nature ; of the events which are past

past and are recorded, or those which are every day presenting themselves to our observation. But when reason vouchsafes to kindle her feeble lamp with fire from the altar of God, and to supply it continually with fresh oil from the sacred stores, what was formerly dark becomes clear ; what before seemed intricate and perplexed, is found to be in perfect order and harmony ; and the dim and scattered fragments become both legible and intelligible.

Nay, farther, the different parts of scripture itself, taken separately and without connexion, may seem to have less force, beauty, and importance ; but when brought together, like the magnet and the steel, they immediately attract each other and unite ; like the scattered bones in the valley, bone coming together to his bone, there starts up a perfect man, nay, an exceeding great army. Type meeting the thing typified, prediction squaring with event, promise tallying exactly with accomplishment, scripture acquires a solidity which bids defiance to all created force : becomes, in its own energetic language, “as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces.” The persons exhibited, the events recorded, the scenes described, the institutions ordained in one age and state of the world, which were the shadows of good things to come, are not only instructive and interesting in themselves, but acquire a weight and importance which they possessed not before, when viewed in their relation to Him, to whom all the prophets give witness, and whose person, character, and work, are the fulfilling of all that was written of old time.

The history of Adam ministers both pleasure and instruction to us as men : but Christians feel a peculiar interest in the perusal of it, by considering Adam “as the figure of him who was to come.”

Having, in the last Lecture, attempted a delineation of the life of the first man, according as it is transmitted to us in the holy scriptures, we proceed in prosecution of our plan, to institute in a few particulars, a comparison

comparison between Adam and Christ ; between the federal head and representative of the human race, and the covenant head and representative of the church. But first, let us observe wherein the first man differs from, and wherein he resembles all other men, who have descended from him by ordinary generation.

First, In the manner of his production. Other men arrive at their maturity, such as it is, by slow and insensible degrees ; they make a progress through infancy, childhood, and youth, to man's estate ; Adam was created perfect at once ; the moment he began to exist, he existed in all the dignity and strength of reason and intelligence. All other men are conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity ; he came from the hands of his Creator, holy and blameless, the son of God. The mental powers of the wisest and most intelligent of mankind, his sons, are narrow and contracted ; we know but a few things, and them imperfectly : the whole world of nature was an open volume to his understanding. Since the fall, men are born into the world with the seeds of decay and dissolution in the constitution and frame of their nature ; but Adam was created incorruptible, immortal. The property and power of the greatest of his posterity is cramped and confined ; limited by mountains, rivers and seas ; liable to be encroached upon, disputed, invaded, taken away : but the dominion of the first man was uncontroled, his authority indisputable, his property universal ; the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea, all, all were put under his feet. But Adam, fallen and lost, is just what all his hapless children are ; like them a slave to divers lusts and passions ; like them liable to disease and death ; like them a prey to sorrow, fear, and remorse ; like them a child of wrath, an heir of hell ; and like them, to be recovered, restored, re-established, only by the mercy of God, and through the atoning blood of a Saviour : and how that Saviour was typified or held forth to the

the world, by the person, character, and relative connexions of Adam, is to be the subject of the remaining part of this discourse.

Adam, perhaps, was not himself aware, that he was in this respect fulfilling the designs of Providence. We know that many others exhibited striking types of the promised Saviour, in their persons, offices, and actions, without being conscious that such honourable distinction was conferred upon them ; and Moses, the inspired author of the history of the first man, nowhere hints, that he considered Adam, or that Adam considered himself in this light. But to us the matter is put beyond a doubt, by one who wrote also under the inspiration of God, the great apostle of the Gentiles, who informs us, that this first man, into whose nostrils God breathed the breath of life, and who thereby became a living soul, was “the type or figure of him that was to come :”\* and in many other places, in his epistles, shews us wherein the resemblance consists. Following him therefore, and the other sacred writers of the New Testament, as our guides, we observe,

First, that Adam typified Christ, as being in a peculiar sense the *Son of God*. The evangelist Luke, in tracing the natural pedigree of our Saviour, ascends step by step from Son to Father, till he comes to the first progenitor of all, “who was,” says he, “the Son of God :” that is, his immediate offspring, deriving his existence without any interposition, from the great source of being. And what saith the scripture concerning the Messiah ? “I will declare the decree : the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,” † and “when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world,” he saith, “And let all the angels of God worship him.”‡

As the manner in which Adam was produced, was new and unexampled, so the conception and birth of Christ were “a new thing in the earth :” the former created

\* Romans v. 14.

† Psalm ii. 7.

‡ Heb. i. 6.

created of dust from the ground, the latter formed by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of a virgin. But Adam the son of God, though made in the likeness of his Creator, expressed that divine image only externally, as the coin exhibits the image and impress of the sovereign : whereas Christ the Son of God displayed “the brightness of his Father’s glory,” and bore “the express image of his person.” Adam the son of God was produced in time, on the sixth day of the creation, after all the other works of God were finished : but Christ the Son of God, the eternal *wisdom* of the everlasting Father, thus speaks of himself, “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth : when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth : while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world : when he prepared the heavens I was there : when he set a compass upon the face of the depth : when he established the clouds above : when he strengthened the fountains of the deep : when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment : when he appointed the foundations of the earth : then I was by him, as one brought up with him : and I was daily his delight, and rejoicing always before him : rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.”\*

Secondly, the constitution of Adam’s nature prefigured the *person* of Christ. In Adam, an immaterial immortal spirit was united to a material earthly body, to constitute one perfect, living man ; in Christ, the human nature was united to the divine, to constitute one perfect life-giving Saviour. The one a mystery of nature, the other a mystery of grace. The one, though

\* Prov. viii. 22—31.

though incomprehensible, yet certainly *known* by every man to be true ; the other, though incomprehensible, yet by every christian *believed* to be true.

Thirdly, the paternal relation which Adam bears to all the human race, beautifully represents to us Jesus the Son of God, as the spiritual father of all them that believe. The first man, Adam, says the text, was made “a living soul,” that is, the source of a natural life, to them who had it not before ; the last Adam was made “a quickening spirit,” that is, the giver and restorer of a spiritual and divine life, to those who having lost it, were “dead in trespasses and sins.” The water in the conduit will rise to the level of its fountain, but can never mount higher. Thus Adam can communicate only what he was, and what he had himself ; being therefore of the earth, earthly, he could only propagate an earthly existence ; but the second man, being the Lord from heaven, can, and does, make his spiritual offspring “partakers of a divine nature.” As every man, upon coming into the world of nature, the instant he draws the breath of life, bears the image of the first man whom God created ; so from Jesus Christ, progenitor of them who believe, all who are regenerated, or born into the world of grace, derive their spiritual existence, and bear the image of him, from whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named. But Adam is the remote, not the immediate father of our flesh ; whereas Christ is the immediate source of spiritual light and life to all those “who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”\*

Fourthly, Adam and Christ bear a striking resemblance in respect of *dominion* and *sovereignty*. When God had created man, “he blessed him, and said unto him, Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” “Thou hast made him,” says the psalmist, “a little lower than the angels ; and hast

\* John i. 13.

hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands : thou hast put all things under his feet. All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field ; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.”\* And Christ the Lord, even in the days of his flesh, while he yet dwelt among men, not only possessed but exercised an unlimited authority over the whole world of nature, over things visible, and things invisible. The prince of the power of the air fled at his command : the boisterous elements heard and obeyed his word : disease, and death, and the grave fulfilled his pleasure. How much more justly, after his resurrection from the dead, when “ declared the Son of God with power,” could he say of himself, “ all power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth ?” and the apostle also, concerning him, “ God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name : that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth : and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”† We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour. “ And he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet.” The sovereignty of Adam, however, was derived, dependent, limited, and might be forfeited : and his history, and our own experience feelingly assure us, “ that, being in honour he continued not ;” that the crown is fallen from his head, and the sceptre dropt from his hand. His derived authority was withdrawn by him who bestowed it ; his dependent power was checked and curbed, because he had abused it ; his limited empire was reduced to nothing, because he presumed to affect equality with his Creator ; and having received dominion under a condition, failing in the condition, he forfeits

\* Psalm viii. 5—8.

† Phil. ii. 9—11.

forfeits his throne. But the sovereignty of Christ is inherent, independent, unlimited, and everlasting. “Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom;” and the Son himself saith, “I lay down my life, that I might take it again. I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” “And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all: and none is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.”\*

Again, the sacred and pure matrimonial union established in paradise between Adam and Eve, was intended to prefigure the mysterious union, the pure and reciprocal affection of Christ and his church: in which also we follow the apostle of the Gentiles in his epistle to the Ephesians,† “for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it: that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy, and without blemish. We are members of his body: of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause, shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

Finally, the whole tenor of scripture teaches us to consider Adam, the first of men, as the covenant head and representative of all his posterity, according to the order and course of nature; and Jesus Christ the Lord,

\* John x. 28—30.

† Chap. v. verse 23.

Lord, as the federal head and representative of all his redeemed, according to the election of grace. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And "if by one man's offence, death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners: so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous."\*

But whatever admits of comparison, by bearing resemblance, must likewise admit of contrast, on account of dissimilitude: for what so like, as to be undistinguishable? What two persons are so much the same, as not to exhibit, to the least discerning eye, characteristic marks of difference? And indeed, the very particulars wherein the first and second Adam coincide, evince the infinite superiority of the one above the other, as well as those circumstances which could not possibly be in common between them.

Adam was assaulted of the wicked one, by a slight temptation; yielded; and fell: Christ was tempted of the devil, by repeated, vigorous, and well-conducted attacks; resisted to the last; and overcame. Adam in paradise, became guilty, and miserable, and liable to death: Christ passed through a corrupted world, lived in the midst of a sinful and adulterous generation, but preserved unspotted innocence; "he did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips." Adam by one offence became guilty of the whole law, poured contempt upon it, and transmitted his crime, together

\* Rom. v. 17—19.

together with the punishment of it, to all mankind : Christ, by a complete obedience, " magnified the law, and made it honourable," approved himself unto God, and conveys the merit of his obedience and sufferings to all them that believe, for their justification and acceptance. Adam, aspiring to a condition superior to that in which his Maker placed him, not only failed to obtain what he aimed at, but also lost what he had ; desiring to be as God, to know good and evil, he acquired indeed the fatal knowledge of evil, but lost the knowledge of good which he already possessed ; and sinking himself, drags down a devoted world with him : whereas Christ, for the voluntary abasement of himself, is exalted to " the right hand of the Majesty on high," " for the suffering of death, is crowned with glory and honour," and " lifted up on the cross, draws all men unto him." The moment we exist, in virtue of our relation to the first Adam, we die for an offence we could not commit ; so, we no sooner become united to the second Adam through faith in his blood, than we become partakers of a spiritual and divine nature, and heirs of everlasting life, in virtue of a righteousness not our own. " Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ ; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." In Adam, we are condemned for one sin : in Christ, we are justified from many offences. The history of Adam represents to us a garden with one tree of life amidst many that were good for food, and near to one that was pregnant with death : the Revelation of Jesus Christ exhibits to us a paradise, all whose trees are of one sort ; whose fruit is life-giving, whose very leaves are salutary ; trees of life which know no decay, never disappoint the gatherer's hope, never feel the approach of winter.

Genes is presents to our trembling, astonished sight, " cherubims and a flaming sword, which turn every way to keep the way of the tree of life." The *Apocalypse* discloses to our delighted eyes, angels minister-

ing to them who are the heirs of salvation ; and our ravished ears hear these glad accents bursting from amidst the excellent glory, “ To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” “ Let him that is athirst, come : and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

# History of Cain and Abel.

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## LECTURE IV.

HEBREWS xi. 4.

*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness, that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.*

A STATE of innocence was apparently of short duration. The history of it contains but a very few particulars. To plunge the human race into guilt and ruin was the work only of a moment : but to restore mankind to life and happiness, employed depth of design to contrive ; length of time to mature and unfold ; and irresistible force to execute. The history of the world is, in truth, the history of redemption. For all the dealings of Divine Providence with men, directly or by implication, immediately or remotely, point out and announce a Saviour. To our first parents, immediately upon the fall, a promise was given, in general, indeed, but not in obscure terms, of deliverance and recovery, by one who should be in a peculiar and proper sense, “the seed of the woman.” And it is far from being unreasonable to suppose, that the skins employed to cover the shame of our guilty first parents, were taken from victims slain by divine appointment ; who by the shedding of their blood were to typify the great atonement, styled in scripture “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” But admitting this to be merely a fanciful conjecture, we have the

authority of God himself to affirm, that the immediate descendants of Adam offered such sacrifices, and looked in faith and hope to such a propitiation : “ For by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness, that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.” The history, character, and conduct of these two brothers, from the materials furnished us in scripture, are to be the subject of this Lecture.

Adam, with the partner of his guilt and of his future fortunes, being expelled from Eden, and tumbled from all his native honours, enters on the possession of a globe, which was cursed for his sake. He feels that he is fallen from a spiritual and divine life, from righteousness and innocence ; that he has become liable to death ; nay, by the very act of disobedience, that he really died to goodness and happiness. But the sentence itself which condemns him, gives him full assurance, that his natural life, though forfeited, was to be reprieved ; that he should live to labour ; to eat his bread with the sweat of his brow ; and not only so, but that he should be the means of communicating that natural life to others ; for that Eve should become a mother, though the pain and sorrow of conception and child-bearing were to be greatly multiplied. In process of time she accordingly brings forth a son ; and pain and sorrow are no more remembered, for joy that a man-child is born into the world. What she thought and felt upon this occasion, we learn from what she said, and from the name she gave her new-born son. With a heart overflowing with gratitude, she looks up to God, who had not only spared and prolonged *her* life, but made her the joyful mother of a living child ; and who in multiplying her sorrow, had much more abundantly multiplied her comfort. Ease that succeeds anguish is doubly relished and enjoyed. Kindness from one whom we have offended, falls with a weight pleasingly oppressive upon the mind.

mind. Some interpreters, and not without reason, suppose, that she considered the son given her, as the promised seed, who should bruise the head of the serpent ; and they read her self-gratulatory exclamation thus, “ I have gotten *the man* from the Lord.” And how soothing to the maternal heart must have been the hope of deliverance and relief for herself, and triumph over her bitter enemy, by means of the son of her own bowels ! How fondly does she dream of repairing the ruin which her frailty had brought upon her husband and family, by this “ first-born of many brethren !” The name she gives him signifies “ possessed,” or a “ possession.” She flatters herself that she has now got something she can call her own ; and even the loss of paradise seems compensated by a dearer inheritance. If there be a portion more tenderly cherished, or more highly prized than another, it is that of which David speaks,\* “ Lo children are an heritage of the Lord : and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man ; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them : they shall not be ashamed ; but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.” But O, blind to futurity, with how many sorrows was this “ possession,” so exultingly triumphed in, about to pierce the fond maternal breast ! How unlike are the forebodings and wishes of parental tenderness and partiality, to the destinations of Providence, and the discoveries which time brings to light ! “ And she again bare his brother Abel.” The word denotes *vanity*, or a breath of air. Was this name given him through the unreasonable prejudice and unjust preference of a partial mother ? Or was it an unintentional prediction of the brevity of his life, and of the lamentable manner of his death ? But the materials of which life is composed, are not so much its days, and months, and years, as works of piety, and mercy, and justice, or their opposites. He dies in full maturity,

\* Psalm cxxvii. 3—5.

maturity, who has lived to God and eternity, at whatever period, and in whatever manner he is cut off. That life is short, though extended to a thousand years, which is disfigured with vice, devoted to the pursuits of time merely, and at the close of which the unhappy man is found unreconciled to God.

Behold this pair of brothers, then, growing in wisdom and in stature; gladdening their parents hearts. They arrive at the age of reason, of vigour, of activity; they feel the law of God and nature upon them. Though the heirs of empire, they must labour for their subsistence—"Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground."\* The earth will no longer spontaneously yield her increase. The clods must be turned up, and the seed must be cast into the furrow, through the care, foresight, and industry of man, else in vain will the heavens shed their influence; and in vain will the blessing of the Most High be expected. That cattle may furnish either the fleece for clothing, or milk for food, they must be protected from inclement seasons, and ravenous beasts; they must be conducted to proper pasture, and provided with water from the brook. And this is the origin of the first employments which occupied our elder brethren in a state of nature. And here it is observable, that the different dispositions of the brothers may be traced in the occupations which they followed. Pious and contemplative, Abel tends his flock; his profession affords more retirement, and more leisure, for meditation; and the very nature of his charge forms him to vigilance, to providence, and to sympathy. His prosperity and success seem to flow immediately, and only, from the hand of God. Cain, more worldly, and selfish, betakes himself to husbandry; a work of greater industry and art; the necessary implements of which suppose the prior invention of sundry branches of manufacture; and in whose operations, and their effects, art blending with nature,

\* Genesis iv. 2.

nature, would claim at least her full proportion of merit and importance. But it is not the occupation which has merit or demerit ; the man who exercises it, is the object of censure or of praise. It is not the husbandry of Cain, but wicked Cain the husbandman that we blame ; it is not the shepherd's life, but good Abel the shepherd that we esteem. " And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof ; and the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering :" \* What is any condition, any employment, unconnected with, unsupported, undorned by religion ! How wretched a creature is the mere citizen of this world, whose views, pursuits, and enjoyments, all terminate in time ! The man who sees not his comforts and his successes as coming from the hand of God ; and whose heart rises not in gratitude to the Giver of all good, is a stranger to the choicest ingredient in the cup of prosperity. But can God, the great God, stand in need of such things as these ? " Is not every beast of the forest his, and the cattle upon a thousand hills ? " Yes, verily : religion was not instituted for the sake of God, but of man : for man cannot be profitable to his Maker, as he that is wise, and good, and pious, may be unto himself. Religion is pressed upon us by the very law of our nature ; and it is absolutely necessary to human happiness.

Cain observes the fruits of the earth arrive at their maturity. He knows that all his care and skill, without the interposition of Heaven, could not have produced a single grain of corn. He had observed the seed which he cast into the ground, dying, in order to be quickened ; he saw from putrefaction a fresh stem springing up, and bearing thirty, sixty, an hundred fold ; and a power more than human conducting this wonderful progress. Of the first and best, therefore,

\* Genesis iv. 3, 4.

fore, he brings an offering unto the Lord ; not to enrich his Maker, but to do honour to himself. Abel's flocks and herds likewise, through the blessing of the Almighty, increase and multiply ; he adores the hand that makes his wealth ; and presents the firstlings of his flock to the Lord. But, alas ! his offering, in order to be accepted, must bleed and die. The innocent lamb which he had tended with so much care, had fed from his hand, had carried in his bosom, must by his hand be slain, must find no compassion from the tender shepherd's heart, when piety demands him—must be consumed to ashes before his eyes. " And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering. But unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect." What made the difference ? Not the nature and quality of the things offered, but the disposition of the offerers. Our text illustrates and explains the passage in Genesis, " By FAITH Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Cain came before God as a righteous man ; Abel as a sinner. Cain brought an offering of acknowledgment ; Abel a propitiatory sacrifice. Cain's gift bespeaks a grateful heart ; Abel's a contrite spirit. Cain eyes the goodness of God ; Abel his mercy and long-suffering. Cain says, " Lord, I thank thee for all thy benefits toward me ;" Abel, " Lord, I am unworthy of the least of thy favours." Cain rejoices in the world as a goodly portion ; Abel, by faith, discerns and expects a better inheritance. Cain approaches, trusting in an imperfect righteousness of his own, and departs unjustified ; Abel draws nigh, depending on the perfect righteousness of a Mediator, and goes away righteous in the sight of God.

In what manner the divine approbation and displeasure were expressed, we are not informed ; whether by a celestial fire seizing and consuming the one offering, and leaving the other untouched ; or by a voice from heaven, declaratory of the mind of God. But we are assured that it was sufficiently notified to the parties

parties themselves. On Abel, undoubtedly, it had the effect which a sense of the favour of God will always produce upon a good mind, a mind which esteems the loving kindness of the Most High more than life; sweet complacency and composure of spirit, “the peace of God which passeth all understanding.” On Cain it produceth a very different effect; he was very wroth, “and his countenance fell.” Men are often angry when they ought to be grieved; and remorse for their own unworthiness frequently becomes resentment against their innocent neighbours; and not seldom it changes into sullenness, insolence, and rebellion against God himself. Observe the goodness and condescension of God; he vouchsafes to reason with, to warn, and to admonish this peevish, petulant man; and gives encouragement to a better temper and behaviour. “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?” He promises to support him in his right of primogeniture, unworthy as he was—“To thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him;” but at the same time he points out the danger of persevering in impiety, and of prosecuting his resentments—“If thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.” But the soul, of which envy, malice and revenge have taken possession, is lost to remonstrance, and insensible of kindness. The innocent are simple and unsuspicuous; intending no evil, they fear none. Cain, it would appear from the letter of the narration, and the scene where the action is laid, decoyed his brother into solitude, under the mask of familiarity and friendship; “he talked with him,” they were in the field. What a horrid aggravation of his guilt! A deed of violence! Murder! A good man’s, a brother’s murder! Deliberately resolved on, craftily conducted, remorselessly executed! Was man’s first disobedience a slight evil, which introduced such desperate wickedness into the world; which transformed man into the most savage of beasts! “He rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.” Now was death

death for the first time seen ; and seen in his ghastliest form ! Death before the time ! The death of piety and goodness ! Death inflicted by violence, and preceded by pain ! Death embittered to the sufferer by reflecting on the hand from which it came ; the hand of a brother, the hand which should have supported and protected him, which should have barred the door against the murderer, not borne the fatal instrument itself ! At length the feeble eyes close in peace ; and the pain of bleeding wounds, and the pangs of fraternal cruelty are felt no more. “ The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit unto God who gave it.” The spirit returns to God, to see his unclouded face, formerly seen through the medium of natural objects, and of religious services ; to understand, and to enjoy the great mystery of the atonement, hitherto known only in a figure. Happy Abel, thus early delivered from the sins and sorrows of a vain world ! And thus death, at whatever season, in whatever form, and from whatever quarter it comes, is always unspeakably great gain to a good man.

Such was the life, and such the untimely end of “ righteous Abel ;” for so our blessed Lord styles him, who fell a martyr to religion. The remainder of Cain’s history ; the short view given us of the character of his descendants, together with the birth of Seth, *given and appointed* of God to preserve the sacred line, to propagate the holy seed, in place of Abel, whom Cain slew ; will, with the permission of God, furnish matter for another Lecture. Let us conclude the present, by setting up the character of Abel as an object of esteem, and a pattern for imitation. .

Faith in God, and in a Saviour to come ; and the righteousness which is of God by faith, are the leading and striking features of this portrait ; and by these, “ being dead, he yet speaketh ;” or if you chuse to adopt the marginal reading, “ is yet spoken of.” It is a desirable thing to enjoy a good name while we live, and to be remembered with kindness after we

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are dead. But reputation is the gift of others ; it is often gained without merit, and lost without a crime. Whereas true goodness is a real, unalienable possession ; it cleaves to us in death ; it accompanies us to the world of spirits ; it instructs the world while we live ; it speaks from the grave ; it shines in the presence of God in heaven. Here, my friends, it is lawful and honourable to aspire. Permit others to get before you in wealth or in fame ; grudge not to your neighbour the superiority in wit, or strength, or beauty : but yield to none in piety, in purity, in faith, in charity ; aim at the highest honours of the christian name ; be humble, and be every thing.

Salvation, men and brethren, has, from the beginning, flowed in one and the same channel. There was not one gospel to the antediluvian, and another to the postdiluvian world ; one method of redemption to the Jews, and another to the Gentiles ; but “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.” Abel, Abraham, Moses, David, Simeon, Paul, and all who have been, or shall be saved, lived and died in the faith of Christ. “Neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”\* This therefore is the great commandment of God to us in these days of meridian light and glory, namely, “that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another.”

Was Abel a type of Christ, as well as a believer in him ! The scripture indeed faith it not expressly ; but surely, without straining, we may discern some striking marks of resemblance. What saith Moses ? “Abel was a keeper of sheep.” What saith Christ ? “I am the good shepherd : the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” What did Abel ? “He through faith brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof, an offering unto the Lord.” What did Christ ? “Through the eternal Spirit he offered

\* Acts iv. 12.

offered himself without spot to God." Were Abel's days cut short by the hand of violence? So "Messiah, the Prince, was cut off, but not for himself." Was Abel hated of, and slain by his brother? Christ "was despised and rejected" of his own, and died by the treachery of a familiar friend in whom he trusted, and by the cruelty of those who were his brethren according to the flesh. Did the blood of Abel cry to God from the ground, for vengeance on the head of him who shed it? O, with what oppressive weight has the blood of Jesus fallen, and how heavily does it still lie on the heads of them, and of their children, who with wicked hands crucified and slew him! Could the blood of Abel atone for his sin? No: but the blood of Christ cleanseth him, and every believer, from all sin. Yet Abel died as a righteous man, Christ as a sinner. Abel, a guilty creature, was justified and accepted through an imputed righteousness; Christ, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners," was condemned and suffered, because "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." Abel suffered death once for all; the body of Christ was "offered once for all," and by that one sacrifice, "he hath forever perfected them that are sanctified." But we pursue the similitude and the contrast no farther. May God bless what has been said. Amen! And to his holy name be praise.

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# History of Cain.

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## LECTURE V.

I JOHN iii. 11, 12.

*For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*

IT is a pleasant task to attend the footsteps of the wise and good, through the thorny maze of human life : to draw nigh with the devout to the altar of God : to learn patience of the meek, compassion of the merciful, and kindness of the generous : to love and admire them in life, and to regret them in death. But ah ! how painful to trace the progress, and to mark the appearances, of "the carnal mind, which is enmity against God," and hatred to man from the first conception of an ill design, to the final execution of a deed of horror ! " Lust, having conceived, bringeth forth sin, and sin when finished bringeth forth death." Nevertheless, it is highly important, that even objects of detestation should be placed before the eyes of men ; that sin should be viewed in her native loathsomeness and deformity, to excite, if possible, aversion and disgust. To direct men in the journey of life, it is necessary to erect beacons, the admonition of hidden dangers and death ; as well as to set up indexes, to point out the right path. The two first men who were born into the world, are designed of Providence to answer this valuable purpose, to those who

who should come after them. Abel, though dead, continues to instruct men in the excellency, amiableness, and importance of true religion ; Cain stands to all generations, a fearful example of ungovernable passion hurrying a man on to blood, and plunging him into despair. Having considered the former as a pattern for imitation, we are now to consider the history of the latter, as affording an useful and seasonable warning to look to ourselves, “lest we also be hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin.”

Cain has now accomplished his bloody purpose. His envied, hated rival is now removed out of sight : the virtues of his brother no longer reproach him : Abel stands no more in the way, to intercept the rays of the favour of God, or of man. Is he not now then at rest ? No eye saw him commit the murder. And if it were known, who shall call him to account ? No eye saw him ! Yes, the eye of Cain saw him : yes, the eye of God saw him : hence the whole earth becomes all eye to behold him, all tongue to accuse him. Who shall call him to account ? That shall Cain ; his own conscience shall avenge the murder : that shall the hand of every man, fly whither he will ; for every man is concerned to destroy him, who makes light of the life of another : that shall God, from whom he cannot fly. Revenge, like “ a devilish engine,” recoils on him that employs it ; or like the flame of Nebuchadnezzar’s fiery furnace, catches hold of, and destroys the ministers of vengeance, not the objects of it.

The mournful tidings must soon reach the ears of the afflicted parents. What were now thy feelings, Eve, when he, who was expected to be a Saviour, turns out a destroyer ? Which is the heavier affliction, a son prematurely and violently cut off ; or a son living to present an object of horror and detestation to their eyes ? A pious child dead, is beyond all controversy, a *possession* infinitely preferable to a profligate alive. Alas ! what shall they do ? To overlook the  
murder,

murder, is to become partakers in the guilt of it ; to punish the murderer, as justice demands, is to render themselves childless. Ah ! how do the difficulties and distresses of their fallen estate increase upon guilty men every day ! The cause, which was too hard for Adam to determine, God takes into his own hand. “ And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother ? ”\* Offences committed in secret, and offenders, whose power and station bid defiance to earthly tribunals, fall properly under the immediate cognizance of Heaven. Behold the throne is set, and the judgment opened. How meek and gentle is God with this murderer ! He would draw confession from his mouth, not as a snare, but as an indication of contrition. The end which God has in view, in making inquiry after blood, is, not the conviction and punishment ; but the conviction, pardon, and recovery of the criminal. What a question, “ Where is thy brother ? ” put by God himself to the wretch whose hands were yet reeking with his blood ? What heart, hardened through sin, dictated the reply, “ I know not, am I my brother’s keeper ? ” Is this the eldest hope of the first human pair ? Is he not rather the first-born of that accursed being, who is a liar and a murderer from the beginning ? “ I know not : ” Falsehood must be called in to cover that wickedness which we are ashamed or afraid to avow. “ Am I my brother’s keeper ? ” How dreadful is the progress of vice ! How crime leads on to crime ! Envy begets malice ; malice inspires revenge ; revenge hurries on to blood ; blood-guiltiness seeks shelter under untruth, and untruth attempts to support itself by insolence, assurance, and pride : and haughtiness of spirit is but one step from destruction. Ah, little do men know, when they indulge one evil thought, or venture on one unwarrantable action, what the issue is to be ! They vainly flatter themselves it is in their power to stop when they please. But passion, like a fiery and unmanageable steed

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\* Genesis iv. 9.

in the hands of an unskilful rider, by one inconsiderate stroke of the spur, may be excited to such a pitch of fury, as no skill can tame, no force restrain ; but both horse and rider are hurried together down the precipice, and perish in their rage.

The milder, and more indirect admonitions and reproofs of God's word and providence being misunderstood, slighted or defied, justice is concerned, and necessity requires, to speak in plainer language, and to bring the charge directly home : and that severity is most awful, which was preceded by gentleness, patience, and long-suffering. God at length awakes to vengeance ; “ and he said, What hast thou done ? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.”\* And mark how every creature arms itself in the cause of God. The dead earth is represented as acquiring sensibility, and refusing to cover blood : the silent ground becomes vocal, and loudly accuses the criminal : the stones of the field are at war with him who has made God his foe : nay, the earth is made not only the accuser, but the punisher of the guilty ; for this new transgression it falls under a heavier curse. Adam for his offence, was doomed to eat bread with the sweat of his brow ; was doomed to labour, yet to labour in hope of increase ; but Cain shall spend his strength for nought and in vain. The ground shall present greater rigidity to the hand of cultivation : shall cast out the seed thrown into it, or consume and destroy it ; or at best produce a lean and scanty crop. Cain and the earth are to be mutually cursed to each other. *It* seems to tremble under, and shrink from the feet of a murderer ; it refuses henceforth to yield unto him her strength, and considers him as a monstrous, mishapen birth, of which she is ashamed, and which she wishes to destroy. *He* considers it as an unnatural mother, whom no pains can mollify, no submission reconcile. “ A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.” When the mind is changed,

\* Genesis iv. 10.

changed, every thing changes with it : when a man is at discord with himself, he is eternally from home. The spacious world, Cain's hereditary domain, is become a vast solitude ; of a home is turned into a place of exile. The person whom all men shun is every where a stranger ; he who is smitten of his own conscience, is continually surrounded with enemies.

The same principle which engages men in criminal enterprises, in the hope of impunity, throws them into despair, upon the denunciation of punishment. As they formerly expected much higher satisfaction from the execution of their wicked purposes, than the most successful villainy ever could bestow ; so now, their own guilty minds outrun the awards of justice itself ; and the awakened conscience does ample vengeance upon the offender at length, amply vindicates the cause both of God and man. This is strikingly exemplified in the case of Cain. His recent boldness and insolence are a strong contrast to his present dejection and terror. He now sinks under the apprehension of intolerable chastisements, and forebodes greater evils than his sentence denounced. His banishment he considers as far from being the greatest of the calamities of his condition ; he feels himself excluded, hidden from the gracious presence of God ; and deserted of his Maker, liable to fall by the hand of every assailant. But God remembers mercy in the midst of anger : and the life which he himself was graciously pleased to spare, no one else must, on any pretence whatever, presume to take away. He only who can bestow life, has a right to dispose of it.

Ye over-curious inquirers, who must needs be informed of every thing, what does it concern you to know, by *what* mark God distinguished Cain, to prevent his being killed by any one who might take upon himself to be the avenger of blood ? Speculation and conjecture, which with some pass for illustration and knowledge, are not the objects of these exercises ;

cises ; but whatever assists faith, whatever supports a sound morality, whatever conveys real information, inspires a taste for goodness, represses inordinate and sinful desire ; whatever teaches gratitude and love to God, and good-will to men, that we would carefully observe, and earnestly inculcate. As it is no part of our intention to wander into the regions of speculation, under a pretence of elucidating the sacred history, it is still less so, to enter the lists of controversy. Your Lecturer has, no doubt, his opinions and prejudices, like other men : his prejudices, however, he is confident to say, are on the side of truth, and virtue, and religion : his opinions, he has no inclination dogmatically to propose ; he neither wishes to make a secret of them, nor expects any one, much less the world, implicitly to adopt them. He is conscious of a desire to do good ; not over anxious about fame ; happy in the affection of many friends, and unconscious of having given cause to any good man to be his enemy. Forgive a digression, suggested by the occasion, not rambled into through design ; proceeding, not from the desire a man has to speak of himself, but from a wish, by doing it once for all, to cut off all future occasion of speaking in, or of the first person. We return to the history.

"It shall come to pass," says guilty, trembling Cain, "that every one that findeth me shall slay me." This is one of the many passages of scripture, which the enemies of religion have laid hold of, and held forth, as contradictory to other parts of revelation, in the view of invalidating and destroying the whole. Here, they allege, Moses is inconsistent with himself ; in deriving the whole human race from the common root of Adam, and at the same time supposing the world so populous at the time of Abel's murder, as to excite in Cain a well grounded apprehension of the public resentment and punishment of his crimes. Either, say they, there were other men and women created at the same time with, or before Adam and Eve ;

Eve; or else Cain's fears are groundless and absurd. A learned and ingenious critic has taken the trouble to refute this objection, by instituting a calculation founded on obvious probabilities at least, by which it appears, that at the time of Abel's murder, the world was sufficiently peopled, on the Mosaic supposition, That all mankind descended from Adam, to render the public justice an object of well grounded apprehension to guilty Cain. We pretend not to assert, that the calculation of a modern author is a demonstration of a fact so remote: if it be probable, it is sufficient for our purpose, that of doing away one of the cavils of infidelity. The birth of Seth is fixed, by the history, in the one hundred and thirtieth year of Adam: it is therefore reasonable to place the death of Abel two years earlier, or near it; that is, in the one hundred and twenty-eighth year of the world. "Now though we should suppose," says the calculator,\* "that Adam and Eve had no other sons in the year of the world one hundred and twenty-eight but Cain and Abel, it must be allowed that they had daughters, who might early marry with those two sons. I require no more than the descendants of these two, to make a very considerable number of men upon the earth, in the said year one hundred and twenty-eight. For supposing them to have been married in the nineteenth year of the world, they might easily have had each of them eight children in the twenty-fifth year. In twenty-five years more, the fiftieth of the world, their descendants in a direct line would be sixty-four persons. In the seventy-fifth year, at the same rate, they would amount to five hundred and twelve. In the one hundredth year, to four thousand and ninety-six: and in the one hundred and twenty-fifth year, to thirty-two thousand seven hundred and sixty-eight." Now, if to this calculation we add, the high degree

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\* *Dissert. Chronol. Geogr. Critiq. sur la Bible.* 1me. *Dissert. Journal de Paris,* Jan. 1712. Tom. LI. p. 6.

of probability that Adam had many more sons, besides those mentioned in the record; that families were generally more numerous than the supposition states; that simple manners, rural employments, temperature of climate, and largeness of room, are circumstances inconceivably more favourable to population, than modern facts, and European customs give us any idea of, we shall have no reason to think it strange, that Cain, under the pressure of conscious guilt, and harrowed with fear, which always both multiplies and magnifies objects far beyond their real number and size, should be alarmed and intimidated at the numbers of mankind, who, he supposed, were ready, and were concerned to execute vengeance upon him. "He went out," the history informs us, "from the presence of the Lord." Some interpreters have, from this expression, concluded, that even after the fall, God continued to reside among men, in some sacred spot adjoining to Eden, and in some sensible tokens of his gracious presence: that thither gifts and sacrifices were brought, and were there offered up; and that from thence, Cain, for his heinous transgression, was banished, and excluded from the society and privileges of the faithful. Whatever be in this, we know for certain that wicked men naturally shun God, and drive him as far from their thoughts as they can: and in the phrase of scripture, God is said to "hide his face" from wicked men, "to turn his back" upon them, "to give them up," to denote his displeasure with them. "And he dwelt," it is added, "in the land of Nod." It is the same word which is rendered in the twelfth and fourteenth verses, a *vagabond*. Why our translators, in the two former verses, give the meaning, or import of the word, and in the sixteenth verse the letters of it merely, is not easily comprehensible. Let it be translated throughout, the sense is perfectly clear, and all ground of idle inquiry taken away. In the twelfth verse, God denounces his punishment, Thou shalt

shalt not die, but be *Nod*, a vagabond in the earth. In the fourteenth verse, Cain recognises the justice of his sentence, and bewails it; "I shall be *Nod*, a vagabond in the earth." And in the sixteenth, Moses gives us the history of its being put in execution, "he went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of *Nod*," a vagabond flying from place to place, skulking in corners, shunning the haunts of men, pursued incessantly by the remorseful pangs, and tormenting apprehensions of an ill conscience. Though you remove all external danger, yet "the wicked is as the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt;" he is "major missabib," a terror to himself. To live in perpetual fear, to live at discord with a man's self, is not to live at all.

The posterity of Cain are represented, in scripture, as the first to build a city. The mutual fears and wants of men drive them into society; put them upon raising bulwarks, devising restraints, cultivating the arts which afford the means of defence against attacks from without, or which amuse and divert within. The invention of music, and of manufactures in brass and iron, are, accordingly, likewise ascribed to his descendants. When men are got together in great multitudes, as their different talents will naturally whet each other to the invention of new arts of life, and the cultivation of science; so their various passions, mingling with, and acting upon one another, will necessarily produce unheard-of disorders and irregularities. Hence, in *Enoch*, the city of Cain, and in *Lamech*, the sixth from Cain, we first read of that invasion of the rights of mankind, *polygamy*, or the marrying more wives than one. In a great city, as there will be many who omit doing their duty altogether, so there will be some, who will take upon them to do more than duty prescribes. The unvarying nearness, or equality which Providence has preserved from the creation of the world, of male and female

female births, is full demonstration, independent of all statute law, that the Governor of the world means every man to have his own wife, and every woman her own husband; that to neglect his intention in this matter, is an attempt to counteract his providence; and that to outrun it is an effort, equally vain, presumptuous, wicked, and absurd, to mend his work.

How long Cain lived, and when, or where, and in what manner he died, we have no information. And little satisfaction can it yield, to attend the footsteps of a wicked and unhappy man, through a life of guilt and remorse, to a latter end of horror. Better for him he had never been born, than to have lived a sorrow to her that bare him, detested and shunned of all men, "a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth," a burthen and a terror to himself. Better for him his name had never been mentioned among posterity, than to have it transmitted to latest generations, stained with a brother's blood. But it is of high importance to know, that God, in his good time, supplied the place of righteous Abel, preserved alive the holy seed, and secured a succession, which should at length terminate in that "promised seed," who was "to bruise the serpent's head," who was "to destroy the works of the devil." "And Adam knew his wife again: and she bare a son, and called his name Seth; for God, said she, hath appointed me another seed, instead of Abel, whom Cain slew."

This wicked man's history is a loud admonition to all, to watch over their spirits; and carefully to guard against the first emotions of envy, anger, hatred, contempt, malice, or revenge. And the words of Jesus Christ confirm and enforce the solemn warning, "I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say unto his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of

of hell fire. Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”\*

Hold thy bloody hand, son, daughter of murderous Cain! Why should a brother, a sister fall by it! That furious look is a dagger; that unkind word has made the blood, the heart’s blood to follow it. *Daughter of murderous Cain!* A *female* hand armed with a sword, lifted up to slay, dipped in blood! No, she wields a more deadly weapon, she brandishes an envenomed tongue: poison more fatal than that of asps is under her lips; it is not the body that suffers, when that unruly member moves; it is the spirit, it is the spirit that bleeds: the man dies, and sees not who it was that hurt him; he perishes in the best part of himself, his good name is blasted; and what has he left worth possessing? The sight of a little material blood makes her faint: a dead corpse terrifies and shocks her; but she can calmly, and with delight, sit down to that horrid human sacrifice, a murdered, mangled reputation!

But the history, also, in its connexion, inspires holy joy and confidence in God, by representing the constant, seasonable, and suitable interpositions of his providence, according to the various exigencies of mankind. Devils and wicked men are continually aiming at defacing his image, at marring his work; but they cannot prevail. The purposes of the divine wisdom and mercy are not to be defeated by the united efforts of earth and hell. Abel dies, but Seth starts up in his room. Jesus expires on the cross, but “through death destroys him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” “Surely, O Lord, the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain.”

\* Matt. v. 22, 23, 24.

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# History of Enoch.

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## LECTURE VI.

GENESIS v. 24.

*And Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him.*

THE regular and uniform dominion of the laws of nature, or the occasional suspension and alteration of them, are equally a proof of the being and providence of God. Whether the sun with uninterrupted speed continues to perform his daily and annual course; or whether he "stands still in Gibeon," or "goes back on the dial of Ahaz;" the interposition of the Most High is equally apparent, and equally to be adored. And why may not He, who "has appointed unto all men, once to die," in order to make his power known, and his goodness felt, exhibit here and there an illustrious exemption from the power of the grave, and thereby vindicate his sovereign rights as the great arbiter and disposer of life and death.

To fallen Adam it was denounced, "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return;" by one man "sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:" But, behold the mortal sentence is remitted in favour of Enoch, the seventh from Adam; behold the order of nature is altered, the decree of Heaven is dispensed with; he is "translated without tasting of death." When an event, so entirely out of course, takes place, it is natural, and not unprofitable, to inquire into the causes of it; for when

the

the issue is singular and uncommon, we justly conclude that the circumstances which led to it, were likewise singular and uncommon. The holy scriptures afford us, but sparingly, materials for a life, which concluded so very differently from that of other men ; but what they have furnished, is striking and instructive.

The venerable father of the human race had now himself paid the debt of nature. The curse of the broken law had been seen and felt in the unnatural and premature death of Abel ; and was at length inflicted, in the departure of Adam, at the mature age of nine hundred and thirty years. The events which had hitherto taken place from the fall, were so many successive demonstrations of the *justice* of God ; under the weight of which, men were, one after another, sinking into the grave. All that *mercy* had as yet done, was to grant a reprieve of forfeited life : and death, though delayed to the thousandth year, is still bitterness in the end. We may reasonably suppose the faithful themselves to have been overwhelmed at the sight of so many vials of wrath, poured out from time to time on their guilty race : and that they were incapable of discovering the promises of favour and triumph, of life and immortality, through the obscure veil of that promise, “ the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.” The sacrifice of Abel indeed discovered a faith in God, which raised the *spirit* above the fear and the stroke of death ; and good men like him, would be led in their dying moments, with holy confidence and joy, to commit their departing *souls* to God, as unto a faithful Creator ; but the body evidently returned to its dust, suffered corruption, and was dissolved. Religion accordingly furnished, as yet, but imperfectly, one of the most powerful motives which it proposes to bring men unto God, as “ the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him.” But at length he vouchsafes to unveil the invisible world ; and shews it to be possible “ for flesh and blood

blood to inherit the kingdom of God." Within fifty-seven years from the time that Adam was laid in the dust, Enoch, without undergoing that change, passes immediately into the presence and paradise of God. And thus there was placed before the eyes of the church, and of the world, in that early period, an anticipated view and example of the final victory which the Messiah was at last to obtain over death, and all the other enemies of man's salvation.

Enoch, however illustrious and distinguished in his latter end, as well as by the superior sanctity of his life, came into the world in the usual manner, and fulfilled the duties of the ordinary relations of human life, while he continued in it. One great branch of holy walking with God, is useful walking among men. Having, to the proper period, lived in the obedience and subjection of a son, he in due time becomes the master of a family and a father; for Methuselah was born to him in the sixty-fifth year of his age, a period earlier than that at which any of the patriarchs, according to the record, became a parent, except his grandfather Mahalaleel. It is not the religion of God, which withdraws or excludes men from society; and teaches disrespect to the secular destinations of providence, or the relative obligations and connexions of life. No, it is the religion of Satan, which would represent as impure, what God declares pure, and permits to all, enjoins upon all; it is "a seducing spirit, and a doctrine of devils," which forbids to marry, "which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them who believe and know the truth." What, is a wretched solitary monk in his cell holier than Enoch, the father of a numerous family, who pleased God, so as to be rewarded with exemption from death, and with immediate admission into the kingdom of heaven? He who lives unconnected, wilfully contracts his sphere of being useful, and of doing good; he wickedly hides his talent in the ground: he robs God, his country, and his kindred;

of services which they have a just right to expect from him.

Again, this holy man deserves our notice, as one of the great ancestors of the human race ; as a link in the mighty chain of providence, which was gradually bringing on that eventful period, that fulness of time, when “the first-born among many brethren,” last in order of succession, but first in dignity, should come for our salvation. Enoch was born in the year of the world six hundred and twenty-two. Adam died fifty-seven years before his translation. Of consequence they were contemporaries, or lived together, for no less a period than three hundred and eight years. Adam’s whole stock of natural and divine knowledge might accordingly have been, and most probably was, communicated, by word of mouth, to Enoch, in so long a course of years : and much did he profit by a communication so important. And this, by the way, instructs us in one final cause of the longevity of the patriarchs in the antediluvian world. As there was then no written word, no transferable record of divine truth, all religious knowledge must have been greatly marred and impaired, if not entirely lost, in the rapid lapse of generations, reduced to the present short standard of half a century. But God graciously lengthened out life then to many centuries ; whereby the father was enabled to instruct his posterity of the seventh or eighth generation, in the things which he himself had received immediately from the fountain of all truth and knowledge. Thus are the dispensations of Providence suited to the necessities of mankind ; thus can God remedy every inconveniency, and make up every defect, in a way peculiar to himself. But to proceed,

Enoch was an illustrious person, not only in the church, but among the heathen. Eusebius, the famous ecclesiastical historian, who flourished and wrote in the fourth century of the christian era, quotes Eupolemus, a heathen author of credit, as affirming,

that

that the Babylonians consider Enoch as the author of their astrology ; and allege, that he is the same who is called *Atlas* by the Greeks, who, from his profound skill in natural objects, and particularly from his discoveries in astronomy, was hyperbolically said to sustain the heavens on his shoulders. The expression, "Enoch walked with God," is, in conformity to this opinion, interpreted of his close and intense application to the study of nature, and of the great additions to the public stock of acquired knowledge, which he made, in consequence of it. That this may warrantably be supposed to constitute one branch of "walking with God" we are not disposed to deny. The study of nature is honourable, pleasing, and improving, and "the invisible things of God" may be clearly traced in "the things that are made." But had Enoch been merely a great naturalist, a sagacious astronomer, or a profound foothsayer, he had not been transmitted to future generations by a distinction so honourable and so uncommon ; nor had his history merited so much of your attention as has already been bestowed upon it. Whether he was an adept in the science of nature or not, we know, upon the best authority, that he was a great "prophet;" for Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, in his general epistle, quotes him in that quality, in these words : "Enoch also the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."\* Now it is no business of mine to inquire in what record Jude found this prophecy of Enoch ; it is sufficient for my purpose that an apostle of the Lord delivers it as such. Our purpose, is not to answer the objections, and refute the cavils of unbelievers, but, humbly to attempt to illustrate,

\* Jude, ver. 14, 15.

illustrate, enforce, and apply scripture truth, to those who receive the bible as the word of God ; as the guide of their faith, the source of their hope, and the rule of their life. From the prophecy itself, it is of importance to observe how early, and how powerfully the doctrine of a judgment to come was taught to the world. How clearly do those men discern, whose eyes are opened by the Spirit of the living God ! How vast and how profound must that intelligence be, which can communicate, even to man, the foreknowledge of events the most remote ; which revealed to Enoch, in the very infancy of the world, the awful day of its dissolution !

In this holy man it is apparent, that the grace of God's Spirit accompanied his gifts ; the spirit of prophecy blended with the spirit of " faith, and love, and of a sound mind." Not like Balaam, who saw in prophetic vision, the star of Jacob arising, but in unbelief shut his eyes against its light ; who despaired things to come by the inspiration of the living God ; but sottishly yielded homage to them who are no gods ; who lived a prophet, but died an idolater : not like Caiaphas, who, following the impulse of his own passions, and governed by the prejudice of a blinded mind, uttered a truth which he was not aware of ; stumbled on a prediction which he was unknowingly, undesignedly helping to fulfil : but Enoch, impressed with the solemn truth which he preached to others, daily improved by it himself. How apt are men to err in this respect ! They earnestly covet the gifts, which are dispensed but to a few, and are not always sanctified to the possessor ; while they are careless about the graces which God is ever ready to bestow upon all, and which always accompany salvation. Let me possess, O God, an humble and a charitable spirit, though with the simplicity of a child, rather than " speak with the tongue of men or of angels," and be destitute of it.

This

This leads us to the interesting, important, and instructive part of Enoch's history, namely, his moral and religious character, expressed in these few but comprehensive words, "Enoch walked with God." Every thing else is transitory and fading. Youthful vigour and beauty are but the short-lived flowers of the spring, which die as soon as they are born; the honourable distinctions of this world are bubbles of empty air, which burst in a moment, and disappear forever; scientific researches and discoveries, are only the amusements of children, who know but in part, and see as "in a glass darkly;" but holy walking with God is the honourable employment of a man: it is a permanent and perennial source of satisfaction; it is the essence of life; the cure of pain; the conqueror of death; the gate of immortality; it is heaven upon earth. And wherein does it consist? "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" No: Walking with God must therefore commence in reconciliation to God: and scripture knows, acknowledges, teaches no other way of reconciliation but one. And the sacred commentator on the passage and character under review, lays down this great leading principle of religion, as the foundation of Enoch's holy conversation, and of the honours which he of consequence attained—"By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."\* Now, in every age of the world, faith has but one and the same object. From Abel down to the youngest of the prophets, and from the fisherman who left his nets, and his worldly all to follow Jesus, to the end of time, the being, the nature, and the will of God have been

\* Hebrews xi. 5, 6.

been, and can be, savingly known, and the mercy of God savingly embraced, only through a Mediator.

On this foundation, what a superstructure of holiness may be raised! What gratitude, love, submission, and obedience to God! What complacency and delight in him! What kindness, compassion, forbearance, beneficence, and charity towards men! What gentleness, meekness, purity, peace; to adorn, to compose, to tranquilize, to bless the man himself! What constancy, perseverance, uniformity, increase in goodness! What venerability as a patriarch! What dignity as a sovereign! What sanctity as a priest! What respectability as a husband, a father, a master! What utility as a pattern and example! And such an one was Enoch; thus he lived and walked with God; and thus escaped death, that end of all men: "He was not, for God took him." This is the last memorable particular of his history. About the import of the words we can be at no loss, after the apostle has explained them, by his being "translated that he should not see death." With the manner of that translation we have nothing to do, as scripture is silent. If God intended it to be a public admonition or encouragement to the men of that generation, we may rest assured he gave full and satisfactory evidence concerning it. That he meant it to afford universal and everlasting instruction to mankind, it is impossible to doubt, from his giving it so honourable and so distinguished a place in his word. And what is the instruction which it administers to the world? Simply this, that a life of faith and holiness is but one remove from glory: that heaven descended to earth, will quickly raise men from earth to heaven: that death either averted, or overcome and destroyed, will at length open a passage to perfect union with God and enjoyment of him. Why should I detain you, to relate the dreams of visionaries, and the fables of impostors, respecting the manner in which God disposed of Enoch after his assumption? There is no edification, and indeed but little

little amusement, in the bold fictions of a Mahomet, or the wild conjectures of a Jewish Rabbin. We acknowledge no other paradise, or habitation of the blessed, but that represented in scripture, as the place where God gives the brightest evidences of his gracious presence, and communicates his glory in full splendour. That, to which Jesus on the cross promised to conduct the penitent thief. That which Paul calls the *third* heaven : and which in other places of the bible is denominated HEAVEN simply and by way of excellency. Thither was Enoch taken ; thither also did Elijah, two thousand one hundred and twenty-one years afterwards, mount on a chariot of fire, and the wings of a whirlwind ; and finally, thither at length, in placid majesty, ascended the Captain of our salvation, “ leading captivity captive.”

Thus, in each of the three great periods of the church, was exhibited an instance of a man taken up into heaven, body and spirit, as a support and encouragement to the hope of believers, of attaining the same felicity. Enoch before the law was given ; Elijah under the legal economy ; and Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men, under the evangelical dispensation. And God, in conducting these events, has gradually disclosed life and immortality, from the dawning of the morning light, to the full glory of meridian splendour. It was a soothing, and an animating spectacle for the faithful of the first world to see a good man vanish away, and after living his period on earth, in piety, purity, and peace, lodged, not in a tomb, but in the bosom of God. It was yet a stronger presumption of immortality, to those who lived in the second period, to see the heavens opened for the reception of one of their prophets ; and celestial ministers in flaming fire, not of anger, but of love, sent to conduct him to the place of the blessed. But it is a demonstration to christians, and indeed the earnest and pledge of their inheritance, to see the great Author and Finisher of their faith, gradually and majestically rising

rising through those vast regions which separate earth from heaven ; and to hear the church triumphant summoning the gates of the palace of glory to be opened, to receive the King of Glory, on his coming to prepare mansions of bliss for their reception, when the days of their probation are ended. “ Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.”

Enoch, Elijah, and Christ, in certain views, can be compared only with each other ; but in all things, *HE* must have the pre-eminence. *They* prophesied through the power and virtue of the spirit *given* unto them ; *he* is the *giver* of that spirit to them ; and to all the prophets. As mere men, *they* must have had their infirmities, and the infirmities of one of them are upon record ? but *he* knew infirmity only by a fellow feeling with the miserable, and he is the atonement for their sins. By the power and mercy of God, they were taken up into heaven ; by his own power he *ascended* on high ; *they* as servants, *he* as the eternal Son of God. In *them*, we have a repeated instance of bodies glorified without suffering death ; *he* “ was dead, and is alive again,” and carried to heaven a body which had been laid in the tomb. In *them* we have an object of admiration and astonishment ; in *him*, a pattern for imitation, a Saviour in whom to trust, a ground of hope whereon to rest. Faith *exempted* them from death ; and faith shall at length *redeem* all the followers of the Lamb from the power of the grave. *Enoch* and *Elijah* ascended as solitary individuals, *Christ* as the first-fruits of them that sleep : and “ lifted up,” is drawing an elect world unto him. *They* were admitted to regions unknown, and among society untried : *he* only returned to the place from whence he came.

We conclude the History of Enoch with this obvious, but we trust, not useless reflection—That those lives which deserve most to be had in remembrance, are most easily recorded, and consist of fewest articles.

The history of an Enoch is comprised in three words, while the exploits of an Alexander, a Cæsar, or any other of the scourges and destroyers of mankind, swell to many volumes. But what comparison is there between the bubble reputation, bestowed by historians, poets, or orators, on the worthless and the wicked ; and the solid, sterling praise conferred on the wise and good, by the Spirit of God, by whom actions are weighed, and who will at last “ bring every secret thing into judgment ? ” And woe be unto them, who love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

Into what a little measure shrinks the whole history of mankind previous to the *flood* ; though a period of no less than one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years ! To that great revolution of the world we are now brought ; and the following Lecture, if God permit, will contain the first part of the History of Noah ; in whose person, the old and new worlds, through the vast chasm of the deluge, were connected together ; and who is exhibited in scripture as a type of Him, in whose person heaven and earth are united, and by whom all things are to be made new. May God bless what has been spoken. Amen.

# History of Noah.

## LECTURE VII.

GENESIS v. 28, 29.

*And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son: and he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed:*

THE fortunes and characters of men are various as their faces. What diversity has appeared in the lives, and in the latter end, of those persons whose history has already passed under our review, in the course of these Exercises! Adam experienced a change more bitter than death. Abel perished by the hand of his brother. The murderer becomes a terror to himself, lives in exile, and dies unnoticed. Enoch is gloriously exempted from the stroke of death, and carried directly to heaven. Noah survives the whole human race, his own family excepted; lives to behold a world destroyed, a world restored.

We are now arrived at that memorable revolution, of which there exist so many striking marks on the external appearance of the globe; of which there are such frequent and distinct intimations in the traditional monuments and records of all the learned nations of antiquity; and of which it has pleased God to give such an ample and circumstantial detail in scripture.

Concerning Noah great expectations were formed, from the moment of his birth. The world was arrived

rived at an uncommon pitch of corruption and degeneracy. The natural evils which flesh is heir to, were prodigiously increased by irreligion and vice; so that the earth groaned, as it were, under the curse of God, and the violence and impiety of men. Lamech, the father of Noah, with the fondness and partiality of parental affection, flatters himself that his new-born son would prove a comfort to himself, and a blessing to mankind; and, most probably directed by the spirit of prophecy, bestows upon him a name significant of his future character and conduct; of the station which he was to fill, and the purpose which he was to serve, in the destination of Providence. He had the satisfaction of living to see his expectations realized; and his eyes closed in peace at a good old age, five years before that great calamity which overwhelmed the human race—the deluge.

Scripture accounts for the universal depravity of that awful period, in these words; “ And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.”\* These expressions the most respectable and judicious interpreters explain, as descriptive of unhallowed and imprudent intermarriages between the posterity of pious Seth, here called “ the sons of God,” and the female descendants of wicked Cain, denominated “ the daughters of men.” Attracted by external and transitory charms, they form alliances inconsistent with wisdom, and disallowed of Heaven. The invention of the fine arts being in the family of Cain, it is not absurd to suppose, that these were called in aid to personal beauty; and that the allurements of music and dress in particular, were employed by the daughters of Jubal, “ the father of all such as handle the harp and organ,” and of

Tubal-Cain,

\* Gen. vi. 1, 2.

Tubal-Cain, “the instructor of every artificer in brass and iron,” to support the impression already made by their fair looks. What ensued? That which will always happen to piety unwisely and unequally yoking itself with irreligion and profanity; the evil principle being much more powerful to pervert the good, than the good to reform the evil. *Giants* are said to have been the issue of those unfortunate marriages; literally, perhaps, men of huge stature, like the sons of *Anak* in latter times: certainly, men of lofty, aspiring, haughty minds; the heirs to the pride, vanity, and presumption of their mothers, more than to the decency, wisdom, and piety of their male ancestors. That corruption must have been general indeed, which comprehended all, save Noah and his household; and it must have been very grievous, to constrain the Spirit of God, to employ language so strong and expressive as this, on the occasion: “And it repenteth the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.”\* When the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, dissolution and destruction cannot be at a great distance. “But Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations: and Noah walked with God.” How honourable for Noah to stand thus single, thus distinguished! Goodness supported and kept in countenance by the mode, and by multitudes, is amiable and praise-worthy; but goodness single and alone; goodness stemming the torrent, resisting the contagion of example, despising the universal sneer, braving universal opposition, such goodness is superior to all praise: and such was the goodness of Noah. He distinguished himself in the midst of an adulterous and sinful generation, by his piety, righteousness, and zeal;

\* Gen. vi. 6, 7.

zeal ; and God, who suffers none to lose at his hand, distinguishes him by special marks of his favour. “ But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” \*

Of no character does scripture speak more highly than of Noah’s, “ he was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and walked with God.” In general calamities, it must needs happen that the innocent suffer with the guilty. But in some cases, Providence is pleased specially to interpose for the deliverance of good men. Rather than one worthy family should perish in the deluge, a whole world of transgressors is respite, till the means of safety for that family are provided. Is a sinful city or nation spared ? We may rest assured there are some valuable, pious persons among them. According to the idea suggested by our blessed Lord, the righteous are “ the salt of the earth,” that which seasons the whole mass, and preserves it from putrefaction and corruption. The apostle Peter styles Noah “ a preacher of righteousness.” He was not carried away by the prevailing profligacy of his day. He preached by a holy descent from the prevailing maxims and practices of the times. He preached by an open and bold remonstrance against the general dissoluteness and impiety. And he preached at length by his works ; by the construction and fitting up of the ark for the preservation of himself and family, and for saving alive a breed of the various sorts of fowls and animals.

It is with pleasure we once more refer you to the sacred expositor of the antediluvian history : “ By faith,” says he, “ Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark, to the saving of his house ; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” † Here a crowd of ideas rush upon us at once. Behold the great God in the midst of judgment remembering mercy. He will not destroy the righteous with the wicked. But God will

\* Gen. vi. 8.

† Heb. xi. 7.

will not vouchsafe to perform that immediately by a miracle, which may be effected by the blessing of his providence upon human foresight, industry, and diligence. He who was pleased to save Enoch, by translating him to heaven without tasting death, thought fit to preserve Noah by means of an ark of his own building. The design and contrivance is God's; the execution is man's. He who could have transported Noah to a different sphere, and have lodged him there in safety, till the waters of the flood had abated, kept him alive and in safety, rolling in the ark, upon the face of the mighty waters. He, who in the morning of the sixth day, by the almighty *fiat*, created at first the whole animal world, and though lost, could have in a moment replaced it, by the word of his power, thought proper to preserve alive the race of animals, by providing a place of refuge, and by a special instinct of his providence, warning them of their approaching danger, and conducting them to shelter.

Behold, dreadful to think! the patience of God at last exhausted: and the decree goes forth. "The earth also was corrupt before God: and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt: for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold I will destroy them with the earth."\* God has warned, threatened, borne with men in vain; and Noah has preached to them in vain. The day of the Lord is come, and who shall be able to stand? And who hath seen, heard of, or is able to conceive a calamity so dreadful? "The end of all flesh is come. I will destroy them *with* the earth." Immediately upon the fall, universal nature underwent a change. The mild influences of the heavens were changed or withheld; the earth refused to yield her increase to the hand of the cultivator: but the

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\* Gen. vi. 11, 12, 13.

full extent and awful import of the curse was never felt till now. By the deluge the whole face of nature was to be altered ; the solid globe dissolved and disjointed ; its parts torn asunder from each other ; its fertility diminished ; that it might present to all future generations, a magnificent palace, but in ruins ; the mere skeleton of ancient splendour.

Some ingenious men have supposed, that at this period, the position and motion of our earth, with respect to the sun, were changed : that till then it was so situated in relation to the heavenly bodies, as to possess an equal and universal temperature of air ; that hitherto a perpetual spring went hand in hand with an abundant autumn : but that then it was placed in the slanting and oblique situation, which occasions diversity of climates and seasons ; which exposes one part to the burning and direct rays of the sun : binds another up in perpetual chains of darkness and ice ; gives birth to volcanos, earthquakes, tempests, hurricanes, and all that tribe of natural evils which afflict the wretched children of men. The effects, undoubtedly, must have been wonderful, as the event itself is altogether preternatural. I have no intention of going at present into a discussion of the question, whether the extent of the flood was universally over *all* the earth ; nor into a philosophical investigation of the means employed in producing a phenomenon so singular. Taking the bible account of the matter in its literal import, we will rather make such reflections upon it as may, by the blessing of God, promote the interests of faith and of holiness in our hearts and lives.

Behold, then, the venerable sage, at the admonition of Heaven, undertaking his great work. The foundation is laid ; the fabric advances ; and every stroke of the axe or hammer, summons a thoughtless and a guilty world to repentance : but “they will not hear, they will not lay it to heart.” I see the good man, maligned, derided, insulted. In their gaiety of heart, they

they scornfully style the ark, *Noah's folly*. The work is finished, but they continue to sing, dance, and play ; and many it is probable have an active hand in the construction of that machine, to which they scorn to resort for shelter from the impending danger. Noah is not to be diverted from his purpose. Neither the immensity of the undertaking, nor the length of time which it required, nor the opposition which he meets with from an unbelieving generation, discourage him in the prosecution of a design, planned by infinite wisdom, and recommended by divine mercy.

How the whole tribe of commentators have gone into the opinion, that the space of one hundred and twenty years were employed in building the ark, is strange and unaccountable. It appears not on the face of the history : it is irreconcileable to reason and experience : as without a miracle, the parts first constructed must have failed and decayed before the latter parts were finished : and it expressly contradicts the chronological detail of the facts, as delivered to us in scripture. For Noah was five hundred years old at the birth of his eldest son. When the order for building the ark was given, all his three sons were married, as we learn from the following passage : “ But with thee will I establish my covenant : and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons wives with thee.”\* The youngest therefore may reasonably be supposed to have seen his fiftieth year ; and the flood came upon the earth in the six hundredth year of Noah’s life ; there is left, then, a period considerably less than fifty years, for the execution of the work ; and it most probably occupied a much shorter space than even that.

Some minute inquirers have taken the trouble to calculate the solid contents, and thence to estimate the burthen of this wonderful vessel. A cubit is the distance in a full grown man, from the elbow to the tip

\* Gen. vi. 18.

tip of the middle finger ; for the conveniency of calculation, it has been fixed at a foot and a half of common measure. Upon this supposition the ark contained one million, seven hundred and eighty-one thousand, three hundred and forty-six cubical feet ; which, according to the usual allowance of forty-two feet to a ton, or two thousand pounds weight, makes the whole burthen to be forty-two thousand four hundred and thirteen tons ; which is considerably more than the burthen of forty ships of one thousand tons each. Such was the vast unwieldy fabric, entrusted, without mast, sail, rudder, or compass, to the mercy of the waves ; and which contained the saved remnant of the human race, and of the animal creation, with all necessary accommodation and provision for the space of more than a year.

Behold the four-footed and the feathered tribes, each according to his kind, by a peculiar instinct of Heaven, flocking to Noah, for protection from the threatening tempest, as formerly to Adam, to receive their names. The beasts take warning and hide themselves, but men, more stupid than the brutes, sin on, till they are destroyed. Every thing announced a storm gathering. Noah preaches to the last hour ; admonishes, entreats, threatens, and invites. What means that preternatural gathering together of the brute creation to one place ? How come they in a moment to change their nature ; to seek what before they shunned ; to forget all animosity towards each other ? Whence is it that “ the wolf dwells with the lamb, the leopard lies down with the kid, and the young lion and the fatling together ? ” What so brutish and incorrigible as men given up to their own lusts !

At length all is safely housed, from the dove to the raven, and God shuts in Noah with his charge. When lo ! the face of heaven is covered with blackness. Nature shudders at the frown of an angry God—the windows of heaven are opened ; the rain descends amain : the barriers that confined the ocean

to its appointed bed are removed, and the waters from beneath start up to meet the waters coming down from above, and join their streams to avenge a holy and righteous God of his adversaries. The gradual increase of the calamity is a dreadful aggravation of its horror. Thick clouds first gave the alarm. Rain uncommonly heavy, and of longer than ordinary continuance, increases the growing surprise and consternation. The voice of mirth is heard no more, and "all the daughters of music are brought low." By degrees the rivers swelling over their banks, and seas forgetting their shores, render the plains and the vallies no places of safety. But the lofty mountains will afford a refuge from the growing plague. Thither, in trembling hope, the wretches fly. The gathered tempest will surely spend itself, and serenity return. Ah, vain hope! the swelling surge gains continually upon them; all is become sea; the foundations of the hills are shaken by the tide; it advances upon them. As their last resource they climb the trees which cover the mountain tops, and cling to them in despair. Their neighbours and friends sink in the gulph before their eyes! their ears are filled with the shrieks of them that perish. All is amazement and woe. At length they are all overtaken and overwhelmed. To have lengthened their miserable existence so long by vain efforts, is only to have lengthened out anguish. To fill up the measure of their misery, they perish in sight of a place of security which they cannot reach; they perish with the bitter remorse of having despised and rejected the means of escape, when they had them in their power; like the rich man in hell, whose torment was grievously augmented, by the sight of Lazarus afar off in the bosom of Abraham.

Compare with these, the feelings of Noah and his little family within the ark. They enjoy a refuge of God's providing. They have full assurance of the divine protection. Ample provision for the evil day

is made. O what gratitude to their Almighty Friend ! O what fervent love among themselves ! O what holy composure and rest in God ! O what awful reflections on the justice and severity of the great Jehovah ! O what sweet and satisfying meditations on his mercy !

The sequel of Noah's history, and the comparison between him and Adam, and between him and Christ, will, if God permit, be the subject of the next Lecture. We cannot conclude the present without reflecting

On the danger and mischief which arise from forming graceless connexions. It administers a solemn and suitable admonition to the male part of my audience, who have not already contracted alliances for life, to consider a principle of religion, and a taste for devotion, as among the leading qualities to be sought after in the female character, and the only sure foundation of honourable and lasting friendship ; as the basis of, and the prompter to every domestic duty.

It administers a just, and, I am sorry to add, a *seasonable* reproof, to that spirit of avarice and selfishness, together with that criminal love of pleasure, which too much characterise the young men of the present day, and to which the higher considerations of piety, modesty, and accomplishments really useful and ornamental, are daily sacrificed.

It instructs my female hearers, too, in the knowledge of what constitutes their real worth and excellence. "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain : but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."\* General declaimers against the female sex have got excellent topics for their spleen, in the seduction of the first man by Eve, and the corruption of the old world by the daughters of Cain. I would make a kinder use of these sad events, by considering them as instances of the great power which women have over men ; and hence earnestly call upon christian women, to cultivate with care and diligence the graces of that character, and to employ their influence, according to their

\* Prov. xxxi. 30.

their different relations and opportunities, to diffuse a taste for what is decent, pious, and praise-worthy ; and they may rest assured that their friends of the other sex will at least study to appear, what they would have them to be.

The example of Noah is a loud call to aim at singular goodness. The multitude of offenders lessens neither the criminality, nor the danger of any one. Let none then think of "following a multitude to do evil." Community in vice may seem to diminish the guilt of sin, but community in suffering is a bitter aggravation of it. Dare to stand, though alone, in the cause of God and truth ; knowing that wicked men themselves revere that goodness which they do not love, and secretly approve the virtue which they will not cultivate. Remember who hath said, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

You have heard of the destruction of the old world by water ; your eyes shall behold that which now is, destroyed by fire. The preservation of Noah by means which God appointed, is a striking type of the method of salvation from sin, death, and hell, by Jesus Christ. The present day of merciful visitation, is the precious season of resorting to that strong hold and place of defence ; and to you the call is once more given, "look to me and be saved ;" "come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

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# History of Noah.

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## LECTURE VIII.

GENESIS viii. 1.

*And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged.*

THE word and the providence of God are the only infallible interpreters of his nature. The existence, and the order of the *visible creation*, evince the being of one Eternal Cause of all things, infinite in wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, mercy and truth. But the harmony, the extent and limits of the divine attributes and perfections, are to be discovered only by observing what comes to pass; and by reading and understanding what God has been pleased to commit to writing, for our instruction. The light of nature is sufficient, for example, to instruct us, that God is righteous; and experience assures us, that he is merciful; but without the help of revelation, and the history of providence, we could not, we durst not say, where justice would stop, and when the tide of mercy would begin to flow. And is it not pleasant and encouraging to reflect, upon the authority of both scripture and experience, that justice, the awful and formidable perfection of the most high God, has its bounds; whereas goodness and tender mercy swell over all limits, possessing a height and depth, a length and breadth, which surpass knowledge? Justice, is the river confined within its banks, and terminating its course in the sea; mercy, the unconfined, immeasurable

urable ocean, in surveying the vast extent of which, the eye fails, and thought itself is lost. It is, moreover, delightful to consider, that the very judgments of Heaven, however dreadful in their nature and effects, are upon the whole, and in the end, unspeakable blessings. The wrath of man, and judgments of which men are the authors, like the uncontroled rage of devouring flames, spare nothing ; they consume root and branch together. But divine justice, like the refiner's fire, lays hold only of the dross, and bestows on the remaining ore greater purity and value.

The history of the deluge, among many other instances which might be adduced, is a plain and a striking illustration of these observations. The last Lecture exhibited the fearful triumph of divine justice. We beheld heaven from above, the earth and ocean from beneath, uniting their forces in their Maker's cause ; "the windows of heaven opened," the "fountains of the great deep broken up," blending their waters, to overwhelm a world of ungodly men. What a prospect did this globe then present to the surrounding spheres ! Involved in gross darkness for forty days together : and when the light returns, no dry land appears, for even "all the high hills which were under the whole heaven were covered :" And O, tremendous object of divine vengeance ! "All flesh died, that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beasts, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man. All, in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven ; and they were destroyed from the earth : and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark."\* "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

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\* Gen. viii. 21, 22, 23, 24.

At length the tempest of wrath spends itself. At length, after a night so dark, so dreary, and so long, the morning light begins to dawn. Nothing but water is to be seen, except yonder little bark floating on the mighty surge, which threatens every moment to swallow it up, or to dash it impetuously on some rocky mountain's top. It contains the sad remainder of the human race; the hope of all future generations. It is preserved, not by the power of him who constructed, but of him who designed it, and who directed it to be built. It is guided, not by the skill of the mariner, but steered by the hand of Providence. That a vessel of such construction, should preserve its upright position for so long a time, in such a wild uproar of nature, must be ascribed to a perpetual supernatural interposition.

The ark has proved the *protection* and *preservation* of Noah; but is it not his *prison* also! How gladly do we submit to a temporary inconvenience for the sake of a great and lasting good! But the inconveniences to which we submit in fulfilling the designs of Providence, shall not be prolonged beyond their needful period, nor increased beyond our strength. What an amiable view of the mercy and condescension of God is presented to us at this period of Noah's history! "O Lord, thou preservest man and beast!" And "doth God take care for oxen?" "God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged." He who makes sphere to balance sphere, in the great system of nature, can make one element check and control the rage of another, in the subordinate economy of our little globe. Wind stops the progress, and diminishes the fury of water at God's command. The dominion of any one element prevailing too long must soon prove fatal to the whole; but their powers blending with, opposing, balancing each other, produce that wonderful and delightful harmony, on which the being

ing and the happiness of mankind depend. “The waters prevailed one hundred and fifty days, and after the end of them, they were abated.”

According to the best chronological calculations, the different eras or stages of this great event, adapted to our reckoning of time, are thus fixed. A few days after the death of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, who was born two hundred and forty-three years before Adam died, and in whose person, of course, the creation of the world and the flood seemed almost to meet; I say, a few days after *Methuselah’s* death, God commanded Noah, on the tenth day of the second month, answering to the thirtieth of November, in the year of the world one thousand six hundred and fifty-six, and before Christ two thousand three hundred and forty-eight, to prepare that week for going into the ark, and to receive all the living creatures which came thither by direction of Providence, in the course of seven days.

On the seventeenth day of the second month, or the seventh of December, in the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, the deluge began, after the Lord had shut him in with all his family. The rain from heaven, and the flux from the ocean, continued without intermission, forty days and forty nights; till the waters prevailed fifteen cubits above the highest mountains; and then stayed, on the seventeenth of January. It continued flood one hundred and fifty days, including the forty days from its commencement to its full height; that is, to the seventeenth day of the seventh month, or the sixth of May, when the flood abated, and the ark rested upon one of the mountains of *Ararat* or *Armenia*. On the first day of the tenth month, or July nineteenth, the waters still continuing to decrease, the tops of the neighbouring mountains became visible from the ark. At the end of forty days from thence, on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, or the twenty-eighth of August, Noah opened the window of the ark, and sent forth the raven,

which never returned to him. After expecting her for seven days in vain, on the third of September, he sent forth the dove, which returned to him the same day, having found no rest for the sole of her foot, through the continuance of the waters. After seven days more, on the tenth of September, he again sends forth the dove, which returned in the evening, with an olive leaf in her mouth, a proof that the waters had decreased below the height of that plant. After waiting yet seven days more, Noah again sends forth the dove, on September seventeenth, which returned not again to him, a proof that "the ground was dry," and that this bird could now find food to sustain life, out of the ark.

On the first day of the first month, answering to October the twenty-third, in the year of the world one thousand six hundred and fifty-seven, when Noah entered into the six hundred and first year of his age, on this first day of the new world, he removed the covering of the ark, and beheld that the ground was dry. And finally, on the twenty-seventh of the second month of this new year, or December the eighteenth, at God's command, who had shut him in, Noah came out of the ark, and all who were with him, in perfect safety; after they had been confined there, in the space of one year and eleven days.

And now that he is liberated from so long confinement, what are his first sentiments; what is the first use he makes of restored liberty? It is neither a day of busines, nor of pleasure, for himself, but of piety and gratitude towards God. A portion of the animals, hitherto cherished and protected with so much care and tenderness; and preserved in the general wreck of nature, must yield their lives, and pour out their blood by their patron's hand, at God's altar. Was not this a direct acknowledgment, that his own life was forfeited with those of the rest of mankind; but spared by an act of distinguishing grace? The stock of living creatures was awfully reduced by the deluge;

deluge ; and this consideration, with a wordly and selfish mind, might have been pleaded as an excuse for delaying sacrifice till victims were multiplied by length of time. But when works of piety, charity, or mercy are to be performed, a gracious spirit considers the urgency of the call, rather than the largeness of means. What is saved from God and the wretched, from religion and humanity, will never make any one rich. What is bestowed on works of piety and mercy, is property laid out at more than common interest. Did Noah's six couple of beasts, and of birds, increase more slowly, that the seventh was devoted in sacrifice to his Maker and Preserver ? I suppose not. In this, if in any sense, what the wise man says, is true, “ there is that scattereth and yet aboundeth ; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty.” O how acceptable to God are the sacrifices of an humble, grateful, faithful heart ! The ground that was cursed for the offence of one, and deluged for the offences of many, by the faith and piety of one, is delivered from the curse, and forever secured from the danger of a second flood : “ And the Lord smelled a sweet favour ; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground for man's sake ; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth ; neither will I again smite any more every living thing, as I have done.”\*

Having satisfied the demands, and received the consolations of religion, Noah and his sons are dismissed of God to their secular employments, to the possession and cultivation of their spacious inheritance. All the grants which had been given to the first man, and all the blessings pronounced upon him, are renewed to Noah and his family. The whole animal creation is afresh subjected to their power and authority. And now, for the first time, we read of the flesh of animals being permitted unto man for food. But, in the very same breath, the use of blood is forbidden to mankind.

Was it intended to admonish men to be tender of the lives of the brute creation ; and not to take away, wantonly and unnecessarily, what they are unable to restore ? Was it to teach men not to use as common food, what was, from the beginning, the symbol of atonement ? Is it that the thing prohibited is unfit and unwholesome for aliment ? Was it, by placing a fence round that which constitutes the life of a beast, to guard, with the greater sanctity, the life of man ? The interdiction undoubtedly *has* a meaning, for none of the precepts of God are merely arbitrary. Wherever he interposes by a special mandate, there we may rest assured, some end of piety, of purity, or of mercy is to be accomplished by it.

God never communicates his grace by halves. He is but half preserved, who has escaped one great calamity, if he must afterwards live in perpetual fear. Noah's family has outlived the deluge ; but every dark cloud is a memorial of that grievous plague, and a threatening of its return. Every watery cloud therefore, with the sun in opposition to it, shall be an assurance, written in the most distinct characters, to them and all generations of men following, that "the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh." The bow in the clouds existed no doubt before this ; the natural cause always and uniformly must produce the same effect ; but it has now a use and a meaning unknown before. It formerly manifested in its most beautiful colours, stupendous size, and exact shape and form, the God of *nature* ; now it has become a witness for the God of *grace*. It was always an object beautiful to behold ; but O, how much greater its excellence and importance, as the token of God's covenant ! When natural appearances lead to saving acquaintance with nature's God, then they are truly valuable and useful.

We are now come to the last memorable event of Noah's life ; which though far less honourable for him, than those which preceded it, the sacred historian has

has nevertheless recorded, with the same exactness and fidelity, which he has employed in transmitting the rest of his history. Noah, though advanced to a late period in life, and assured that henceforth the duration of human life was to be greatly abridged, engages with alacrity in the labours of husbandry. That God who thought fit to save him from the flood, by an ark of his own building, will not preserve him alive, but by fruits of his own raising. He who would reap the clusters of the vine, must first plant, shelter, prop, and prune the vine. But behold the juice of the grape in a new state; possessing a quality unheard of before. Eaten from the tree, or dried in the sun, it is simple, and nutricious like the grain from the stalk of corn; pressed out and fermented, it acquires a fiery force, it warms the blood, it mounts to the brain, it leads reason captive, it overpowers every faculty, it triumphs over its lord. How often have arts been invented, which have proved fatal to the inventors? Every poison, it is said, contains, or is produced contiguous to, its antidote. Such is the care, such the goodness of God to men. But alas! must it not also be observed, that our very food and cordials contain a poison, through the ignorance or excess of man. Was Noah unacquainted with this intoxicating quality of wine, and overtaken through inexperience? Or did the faithful monitor of the old world, and the father of the new, deliberately sacrifice decency and understanding to this insinuating foe? In either case, who can help deplored his shameful, his degraded condition; and the consequences which flowed from it! We pity the dishonoured father; but we detest the unnatural son, who could make sport of his parent's shame. He who intoxicates himself does ill; but he who in cool blood, can take an indecent, or an injurious advantage of the intoxication of another, does worse. The modesty and dutifulness of two of Noah's sons, exhibit a lovely and instructive example to youth; their ingenuous shame,

their

their eagerness to conceal the infirmity of their father. They deserve to be blessed with numerous and thriving families, who have practised duty and obedience to their parents. This accordingly is the blessing entailed upon Shem and Japhet; and Ham's disrespectful and indecent behaviour towards his father, is in like manner punished in the entail of a lasting and heavy curse upon his offspring. Of all the precepts of the law, the fifth most obviously, directly, and certainly requires the breach, or the observance of itself. Noah awakes from his wine, and meets the reproof of his intemperance, in the knowledge of what his sons had done unto him, when he was not himself. And what reproof so keen and severe, to an ingenuous mind like his, as the reflection, that he had made himself an object of scorn and derision to one part of his own family, and of sorrow and pity to the other.

At length the period arrives that Noah must die; and he who had seen the world in three different states as it came from the hands of the Creator, unless as it was affected by the fall—covered over with the waters of a flood—and restored again through the mercy of Heaven, at last sinks into the grave, and ceases to have any farther interest in the world. He survives that great destruction, the deluge, three hundred and fifty years; lives to instruct a new race of men in the knowledge, the love, and the worship of the true God; lives to see his progeny increased and multiplied, and spreading on every side; lives to exhibit to a short-lived race of mortals an example of patriarchal dignity and longevity; and dies at the age of nine hundred and fifty years; short of the life of Methuselah only by nineteen. From that period, the life of man began gradually to decrease, till it shrank into its present little measure. Whether life be long or short, “death certainly is the end of all men, and the living should lay it to his heart.”

Noah

Noah and Adam may be compared and contrasted in various respects. Adam the father of the first world ; Noah of the second. Adam, by one wilful transgression, involved all mankind in ruin ; Noah, by many repeated efforts, in vain endeavoured to save mankind from impending destruction. The unbelief and disobedience of Adam affected all ; the faith of Noah preserved a remnant. The grant of the whole globe was conferred on these two alone, of all mankind. For the crime of the one, the earth was cursed ; through the sacrifice of the other, the curse was withdrawn. In both, their own ill behaviour was punished in the ill conduct and behaviour, and in the punishment of their children. Upon the guilty son of Adam God pronounces sentence, and executes judgment in person : the injured father himself, in the case of Noah, is made the minister of wrath, to denounce the vengeance of God upon his own guilty son.

Adam and Noah were both distinguished types of Christ ; and from this they derive their chief dignity and importance. Some interpreters, who wish to find out an evangelical meaning to every the minutest circumstance in the sacred records of the Old Testament, have alleged, that the import of the names of the antediluvian patriarchs, taken in their order, contain a prophecy of the Messiah : with which I shall present you, rather as discovering an honest zeal for the prevalence of gospel ideas, than as containing a solid and satisfactory argument, in support of gospel truth. Blessed be God, our most holy faith is built on a broader, surer, and more immovable foundation than the uncertain and arbitrary interpretation of a few Hebrew names. But the speculation is at least innocent, and may perhaps have afforded some degree of consolation to the pious minds which have adopted it. The explanation of the names alluded to, is this. *Adam*, man : *Seth*, placed : *Enos*, in misery : *Cainan*, lamentable : *Mahalaleel*, the blessed God : *Jared*, shall come : *Enoch*, teaching : *Methuselah*, that death shall

shall send : *Lamech*, to the smitten, or miserable : *Noah*, consolation. But we are fully warranted by many clear, indubitable, and explicit applications of scripture, “to preach the unsearchable riches of the gospel of Christ,” from the history of Noah. Shall I encroach upon your patience, and proceed to it now? or implore your candour for an attentive hearing of it, extended to its proper length, and displayed in its minuter circumstances, in a future Lecture? I must trespass no longer upon the former; but rather trust to the latter. And the more, that I cannot but wish both preacher and hearers might bring freshness of spirits, patience of attention, and thirst of improvement, to a subject of first-rate importance in the scale of divine truth. And now may He who, by an ark of Gopher-wood, saved Noah and his household from a deluge of water, deliver us, by the grace of his Son Christ Jesus, from that more dreadful deluge of fire, which scripture assures us shall come upon the “world of the ungodly.” “Flee now to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope:—behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation.” To the God of mercy, through the Son of his love, be ascribed immortal praise. Amen,

# Noah and Christ compared.

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## LECTURE IX.

ISAIAH liv. 7, 8, 9, 10.

*For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: For as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.*

AS the lesser streams fall into and are mixed with the greater; and as all the rivers empty themselves, and are lost in the ocean; so the whole course of events, from the creation of the world, in their separate currents, and in their general and combined tide, flows towards one grand era, styled in scripture, the *fulness* of time; and terminates in one event, of infinitely greater moment than all the rest, the “manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh.” The patriarchal dignity, prophetic foreknowledge and penetration, the sanctity of the priesthood, and the regal majesty, all point out, all move towards, all centre, and settle in Him, who is “the everlasting Father,” “the Prophet who should arise,” “the apostle and

High

High Priest of our profession," the "Prince of the kings of the earth."

We are struck with a pleasing awe when we converse with the venerable men who lived before the flood. Adam the first of men; Enoch who walked with God; Noah the preserver and restorer of the human race.

But in tracing the history of their lives, a still small voice continually whispers us in the ear, saying, A greater than Adam, a greater than Enoch, a greater than Noah is here: a voice from heaven proclaims, sinners, attend; "Behold my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him." Some, with more zeal and honesty, than wisdom and truth, have laboured to discover and to establish a resemblance between our blessed Lord and those who were types of him, in every the minutest circumstance of their lives, and in every expression they employ to describe their private and personal feelings and situations. This has been carried so far as to strain and stretch the penitential language of David in the fifty-first psalm, respecting the matter of Uriah, into expressions suitable to the character and condition of the Messiah, in certain supposed circumstances. Guarding ourselves against every thing like a forced construction and application of scripture; without hunting after fanciful resemblances, which tend to weaken and impair the truth, instead of strengthening and supporting it; we will endeavour, carefully to point out and improve those which actually exist; namely, such as the Spirit of God directs us to form, by pointing them out to us in the written word; or such as by fair analogy, that is, from known and admitted facts, or from obvious and incontrovertible reasonings, we are warranted to form for ourselves.

Happily, the History of Noah is one of those, in the use and application of which, scripture has lent us much assistance. The very *name* of that patriarch was not given him without a meaning and design, which extended much farther than to his person, and the day

day in which he lived. "This same," said his pious father, "shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed."\* *Noah* signifies *comfort, rest, peace*. And when God is bringing his first begotten into the world, this is his proclamation by the mouth of his prophet, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, faith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."† And that we may be at no loss to what period, and to what person these expressions are to be applied, it immediately follows, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."‡ Was Noah an expected deliverer from the curse pronounced upon the ground for man's disobedience? Alas! the curse continued nevertheless; nay the very *blessings* of life become accursed to every impenitent transgressor: but Christ "is our peace, who has redeemed us from the curse," not of the ground, but of the law, "being made a curse for us;" and under whose dominion, when finally established, "there shall be no more curse."

"Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord;" and of Christ he faith, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations:" and of whom speaks the prophet, when he faith, "he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth?" and the apostle, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth?" and again, "such

\* Gen. v. 29.

† Isai. xl. 1, 2.

‡ Isai. xl. 3, 4, 5.

“ such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” Noah was a preacher of righteousness ; and the spirit of prophecy puts these words into the mouth of the Messiah himself, “ I delight to do thy will, O my God : yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation ; I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, I declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation : I have not concealed thy loving kindness, and thy truth, from the great congregation.”\* Noah preached, and preached in vain, to a corrupted, hardened generation, ripe for the destruction of a flood ; Jesus, with similar mortification and regret, preached to an impenitent, incorrigible nation, devoted to destruction by means of a Roman army. “ Noah walked with God :” Christ says of himself, “ I and my Father are one ;” and “ my meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” But Noah, though righteous, could not by that righteousness save the men of his generation from the judgments of God : his faith and holiness availed himself, and those who with him feared, believed, and prepared ; but could not save another : and there is a supposed state of corruption so great, and a day of vengeance so awful, that though these three men, *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job*, were in the land, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness : but the righteousness of the blessed Redeemer is of such infinite value and perfection, as to deliver from spiritual and eternal death an innumerable multitude of transgressors.

But the most memorable incident in the history of Noah’s life, was the “ building of the ark for the saving of his house.” Every circumstance relating to which, exhibited a figure of him who was to come. And first, they exactly coincide in respect of the design or contrivance. The plan of the ark was formed

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\* Psalm xl. 8, 9, 10.

in the eternal mind, long before it was communicated to Noah ; thus believers are “ chosen of God in Christ before the foundation of the world.” To human apprehension at first sight, and to human understanding enlightened by experience, and the astonishing improvements made in naval architecture, a vessel of such construction would be far from appearing the likeliest means of preservation from a calamity like the deluge. Not a seaman or ship-builder in Britain, but would pronounce it a clumsy piece of work, would affirm it could not possibly live at sea, and predict its foundering in the deep, even without the attack of a storm. Thus “ the cross was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness ; but to them who believe, Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” We read of no other methods of safety being thought of, or attempted, by the thoughtless men of the antediluvian world. When the evil overtook them, they would naturally flee to such wretched refuge as despair pointed out ; but whatever other means of salvation in the great and terrible day of the Lord, human imagination may have devised, the scripture faith expressly, “ Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved :”\* and unavailing, in that day, will be the desponding invocations of impenitent sinners, to “ the rocks to fall upon them, and to the hills to cover them from the presence of God, and the wrath of the Lamb.”

As the ark was a type of the Messiah, being both designs of infinite wisdom ; so do they also coincide in the end or purpose to which they were destined, the salvation of those who fled, and who flee thither for refuge. “ Noah prepared an ark for the saving of his house ;” and “ God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life :”† and

\* Acts iv. 12.

† John iii. 16.

and “after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”\* Both of them fully and perfectly answer the end of their institution. The ark was at once a place of shelter from the storm ; contained all necessary accommodation and provision ; furnished opportunity and means of the most delightful communion and fellowship ; and constituted the dearest bond of union and love. Who does not see in this, that wonderful person of whom prophecy thus speaks, “A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest : as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”† In whom “it has pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell ;” of whom “the whole family in heaven and earth is named ;” who thus declares in his own person, “those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost,” who enjoins them “to love one another,” and prays for them, that “they all may be *one*, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be *one* in us.”

The attractive influence of the gospel, and its blessed tendency to tame and subdue the high thoughts, and the savage dispositions of the human heart, were beautifully prefigured by the instinctive call of Providence to the brute creation to seek shelter in the ark, and by the placability and gentleness of their dispositions towards each other while they continued in it. The words of Isaiah are literally a history of the deluge, and they contain a prediction equally beautiful and striking, of the peaceableness and concord of Christ’s kingdom ; “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and the calf, and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together : and the lion shall eat straw like the

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\* 1 Cor. i. 21.

† Isai. xxxii. 2.

ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain ; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”\* Under the influence of Christ’s Spirit, the fierce and the proud, the cruel and the resentful, the envious and the passionate, “ put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering ;” and learn to “ forbear one another, to forgive one another.”

Again ; the figure shifting from the ark, to him who built and constructed it, according to the pattern given him of God, Noah himself becomes the type, and Jesus the person typified. The plan or design of the ark was of God ; the execution was Noah’s ; in like manner, the plan of redemption, which was formed of old, even from everlasting, God was at length manifested in the flesh to execute, and in it he laboured and persevered, till bowing his head, “ it is finished.” What shall we say ? The very waters of the flood have a figurative prospect of gospel times and gospel ideas. The deluge was a purifier of the old world, corrupted and defiled by sin ; and “ a few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water ;” the antitype of which remarkable event, we are informed by the apostle Peter, is our salvation by baptism ; “ The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, [not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God] by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”† When we behold the same element destructive to one and salutary to another, are we not led to think of that doctrine which is “ unto God a sweet favour of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish ? to the one it is a favour of death unto death, and to the other, a favour of life unto life :” and of that other under which the Baptist represents

\* *Isaiah xi. 6—9.*

† *1 Peter iii. 21.*

represents the power and coming of the Son of God? “ Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner: but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”\*

The wind or spirit which passed over the earth, and assuaged the waters, points out to us not obscurely, the power of that Divine Spirit, who in the beginning “ moved upon the face of the deep,” and reduced chaos into order and beauty; and who through the whole course of providence “ sitteth upon the flood;” even “ the Lord on high, who is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.” Is it not sweetly figurative of that dawn of hope, that proclamation of mercy, before which the tide of wrath begins to ebb and to subside?

The figure of the dove declares its own meaning and import. In the natural purity and innocence of that sweet bird; in her going and returning; in the expressive speed of her first excursion; in the expressive symbol she bore in her mouth at her second return, the olive-leaf; in the clear and explicit information conveyed by her not returning again the third time, it is impossible not to observe a prefiguration of the purity and innocence of the Holy Jesus, the *Mediator* between God and man. “ How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth *peace*, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth *salvation!*” “ Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.” As the state of the world was gradually unfolded to Noah by the different appearances and conduct of his dove; so was the plan of redemption by Jesus Christ gradually disclosed to the world, in types, in allegories, and by predictions, till the morning light at length became perfect day, and “ God, who

\* Matth. iii. 12.

who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.”\*

As the ark, after the tossings and tempest of the flood, rested safely on the top of Mount Ararat; so Christ, having suffered all things that were appointed, “entered into his glory,” and established the faith of them that believe in him, upon “a rock, against which the gates of hell never shall prevail.” The ark afforded protection to those only who fled for shelter under its roof, and whom God shut up within it. It was not merely the *sight* of that wonderful fabric, nor the *knowledge* and *approbation* of the plan, nor an *active hand* in the rearing of it, nor an *external adherence* to it, when the evil day came, that afforded safety to the miserable. Our Lord himself furnishes us with the application of these important circumstances, “Not every one that faith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity.”† And impressed with an awful sense of it, Paul says of himself, “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly: so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away.”‡

Farther; when we see Noah at the altar of God, offering the sacrifices of thanksgiving, presenting a victim of every clean bird and beast, and God smelling a favour of rest; ceasing from his anger, remitting the curse, and establishing a new covenant upon

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\* Heb. i. 1, 2.    † Matt. vii. 21—23.    ‡ 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27.

better promises, we "behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." Christ the altar that is erected, the priest who officiates, and the victim which is offered up. We behold provision made for the remission of transgressions committed under the second covenant, for which there was no remedy under the first. The passage on which this discourse is built, is a full and particular illustration of this. The whole chapter refers to the bringing in of the Gentile nations to the standard of the Messiah. "For thy Maker is thine husband [the Lord of Hosts is his name] and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the Lord has called thee as a woman forsaken, and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee."\* Expressions beautifully figurative of the strength, beauty, and duration of the christian church, and of the immovable foundation on which the christian faith is built.

Finally, the rainbow, the token of God's covenant of peace with the earth, produced, in the course of nature, by the rays of the sun falling on a cloud impregnated with rain; without straining for a similitude, exhibits mercy rejoicing over judgment; the rays of the sun of righteousness reflected from, and dispersing the clouds of divine wrath and human guilt.

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\* Isaiah liv. 5—10.

It represents the dispensations of the Most High towards men, as distinguished from those spiritual beings who never sinned, and those who never shall be saved. In hell, the gloom is not for a single instant dispelled by one beam of light, nor despair relieved by one ray of hope. The serenity of heaven is never obscured by one frown from the face of God. But our world is the theatre, on which are displayed, “mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace kissing each other;” “truth springing out of the earth, and righteousness looking down from heaven.” The bow in the cloud is the reverse of that described by the Psalmist : “He hath bent his bow and made it ready, he hath also prepared for him the instruments of death : he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.”\* No, it is a bow unbent, armed with no deadly weapon, and its dangerous, threatening side averted from us, and turned towards heaven. The bow is never to be seen but when one side of the heaven is clear, and the sun above the horizon ; unless it be by the sober, silver rays of the moon’s mild, reflected light. Thus every thing useful and pleasing in nature, every thing satisfying and consolatory in providence, in order to be perceived and enjoyed, must be irradiated, explained, and applied, by the eternal Wisdom, the Word of God, “the true Light which enlighteneth every man who cometh into the world ;” and thus many of the objects which we are incapable of contemplating, by the direct and immediate illumination of the glorious “Father of Lights,” are tempered to our perception, use, and delight, by reflection from other orbs. “No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

Thus have we endeavoured to point out those particulars in the person, character, and life of Noah, which seem more obviously typical of Christ the Lord ; but I cannot conclude the parallel, without

directing your thoughts to one article of resemblance more. The old world having undergone the purgation of a flood, was delivered in its renewed state to Noah and his natural posterity for a possession : and from the world that is, when purified by fire, " We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." " He that sitteth upon the throne faith, Behold I make all things new ! for the former things are passed away." And he that is before the throne faith, " In my Father's house are many mansions ! if it were not so I would have told you : I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." " Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." " Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Let me now exhort you in the words of Christ, " Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they testify of Him, who is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end :" and as you read and meditate, the light will break in upon you, and the Saviour of the world will stand confessed in every page, in every line ; so that ye may say one to another, in the words of Andrew to Simon his brother, " We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." And when you see all that is venerable in respect of antiquity, all that is sacred in office, all that is dignified in royalty, bringing their glory and honour to him, lay yourselves at his feet, and say, " he is our Lord and we will worship him ;" for " surely this is the Son of God."

And here closes the first great period of the world. There next ensues a very considerable space of time, fruitful indeed in names, but barren in events. Providence has thought fit to draw a veil over it for this obvious

obvious reason, that however amusing or instructive the detail of that period might be to us, as citizens of this world, having no special relation to the history of redemption, it cannot be very deeply interesting to us as christians. And the design of the bible is not so much to convey to us natural and political knowledge, as the knowledge of “the only true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, whom to know is life eternal.” The sacred historian accordingly hastens on to the times of Abraham, when the promises and predictions of the Messiah become more clear and express, and that Saviour was explicitly announced, “in whom all the families of the earth” should at length be blessed.

When we have marked the progress of the dawn, and observed the first rays of this rising sun, through the medium of type, figure, and prediction ; when we have considered the tokens of approaching glory in the east ; let us look up together, and behold the splendour of the full-blown day ; let us contemplate the glory spread around us, by “the sun shining in his strength.” The scattered glimmerings of light,—a terrestrial paradise, the first promise of deliverance by the seed of the woman, Abel’s sacrifice, Enoch’s translation, Noah’s ark, and all that followed during so many ages, were at length collected and lost in that one great luminary, which is the light of the christian world. But alas ! “this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light ; because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light ; neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.”\* Let us endeavour to approve ourselves, “children of the light, and of the day :” and observe and follow Him, who thus speaks concerning himself, “I am the light of the world ; he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

\* John iii. 19, 20.

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# History of Abram.

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## LECTURE X.

GENESIS xiii. 1.

*Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.*

IT would yield neither amusement nor instruction, to lay before you in detail, the genealogical succession of the sons of Noah, from the flood to the calling of Abram. Scripture presents us with a very general view of that period. It shews us mankind engaged in pursuits common to men in every age. It exhibits the usual and natural operations, and the effects of pride, and ambition, and avarice: plans of empire formed; imperial cities founded; new discoveries made, and settlements established. For a considerable time, the recent horrors of the deluge must have laid fast hold of the minds of men, as the awful monuments of it were every where before their eyes. This would naturally, for a while, confine them to the mountainous regions of Armenia, where the ark first rested. But as their fears diminished, and their numbers increased, we find them, allured by the beauty and fertility of the plains, which were washed by the Tygres and the Euphrates, descending gradually from the heights, and spreading along the vast and fruitful valleys of Shinar or Chaldea. And he who had seen the whole human race cut off for their wickedness, his own family consisting of eight persons excepted, lived to see the descendants of that family, almost as numerous

ous and as profligate as the generation of men which had been destroyed by the flood. He had the mortification, in particular, of seeing his posterity engaged in an enterprise equally absurd, vain and impious: that of building “ a city and a tower whose top should reach unto heaven,” to transmit their names with renown to posterity, to be the great seat of empire, and thereby the means of preserving them in one grand system of political union, and of securing them from discord and dispersion.

The sacred volume informs us, that the very means which they had vainly devised to keep themselves together, in the wisdom of God, separated and scattered them. But the history of that event falls not within the design of these exercises. Leaving Nimrod and his vain-glorious companions to erect the monument of their own folly, and to feel the consequences of their impiety, let us attend the sacred historian in tracing, not the rise and progress of empire, but the formation, the unfolding, and the execution of the plan of redemption. Dropping the mighty founders of Nineveh and Babylon in that oblivion wherein providence has plunged them never to emerge, let us accompany the father of the faithful from Ur of the Chaldees to the place of his destination, and observe the increasing splendour of the day of grace, and adore the wisdom, truth and faithfulness of Him who promised, and who “ hath done as he had said.”

It may be proper to observe, in the entrance of the history of this great patriarch, that one life, that of Noah, almost connects Adam with Abram. For Noah was born only one hundred and twenty-six years after the death of Adam, and lived till within two years of Abram’s birth. In one sense, therefore, the father and founder of the Jewish nation is very little more than the third from the first man. So readily, immediately, and uninterrupted, might the knowledge of important truth, particularly the promises of salvation, be communicated through so long a tract of time.

time. It is farther observable, that as from Adam to Noah there are ten generations, so likewise from Noah to Abram there are ten generations; but the latter succeeded each other much faster than the former. The first ten occupy a period of one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years; the last is shrunk down to three hundred and fifty-seven. We are henceforward, therefore, to be conversant with lives reduced nearer to our own standard. While extreme longevity was necessary to carry on the designs of Providence, men lived to the age of many centuries. When God saw it was meet to substitute a written and permanent revelation, in the place of oral tradition from father to son, the life of man was shortened.

The history of Abram's life commences at a period of it, long before which, that of most men is concluded; namely, at the seventy-fifth year of his age. It is never either too early or too late to serve and follow God. But the folly and presumption of youth is but too apt to defer matters of the greatest moment to the last hour; and this fatal waste of the seed-time of life, is the sure foundation of dishonour, remorse, and despair, in old age. But though our patriarch had arrived at a period of life so advanced, before the sacred historian introduces him upon the stage, the obscurity which lies upon his earlier years is amply compensated by the rich, instructive, and entertaining materials, furnished from the divine stores, for the history of the latter part of his life.

There is something singularly affecting, in the idea of an old man giving up the scenes of his youthful days; scenes endeared to the mind by the fond recollection of past joys; forego ing his kindred and friends; and becoming an exile and a wanderer, at a period when nature seeks repose, and when the heart cleaves to those objects to which it has been long accustomed. But that man goes on cheerfully, who knows he is following God; he can never remove far from home, who has "made the Most High his habitation;"

tation ;” he who falls asleep in the bosom of a father, knows that he shall awake in perfect peace and safety. Accordingly, “ Abram, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went.”\*

Abram being held forth in scripture as the pattern of a cheerful, prompt and active faith in God, as we proceed, we shall mark the appearances and the effects of that faith in the successive trials to which it was exposed. The very first act of his obedience to the will of Heaven, proves the existence and the prevalency of this powerful principle. When called to leave his country and his father’s house, “ he went out, not knowing,” not *caring*, “ whither he went.” What could have induced him to make such a surrender, but a sense of his duty to God, an entire acquiescence in the wisdom and goodness of Providence, and a full assurance that his Heavenly Father both could and would indemnify him, for every sacrifice which he was called to make! A sacrifice similar to this every real christian virtually offers up, when he renounces the pomp and pleasure of this vain world, to the hope of “ an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” Ur of the Chaldees was become a land of idolatry. Abram’s nearest relations had lost the knowledge, and deviated from the true worship of the God of their fathers. To have continued there, would have been to prefer a situation dangerous to religion and virtue. Why may we not suppose the call given him to depart, to be the impulse of an honest and enlightened mind, stirred at the sight of so many idols, and the impure rites of their worshippers; and prompted to flee, at whatever expense, from scenes of so much impiety and pollution. When men are to receive immediately their indemnification or equivalent, the merit of a surrender is small; but it requires the faith and trust of an Abram, to take

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\* Heb. xi. 8.

a general promise of God as full security. But his faith had to struggle, in the very setting out, with difficulties seemingly unsurmountable. The promises made to him were not only conveyed in very general terms, and the accomplishment removed to a great distance ; but natural impossibilities also barred the way. What a slender prospect must a man entertain of a numerous offspring, when both nature and religion prevent the possibility of his having children ? The Spirit of God therefore bestows a just tribute of praise on this part of his conduct, he “ believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness,” because that “ against hope, he believed in hope.” But when we come to examine the promise more particularly, we shall find that it contained every thing which can rouse and fire a noble and generous mind : personal honour and felicity ; “ I will bless thee and make thy name great :” a numerous and a thriving progeny, who to latest ages should acknowledge him as their founder, and glory in their relation to him ; “ I will make of thee a great nation, and thou shalt be a blessing :” universal benefit accruing to the human race from him ; “ in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” Behold then the illustrious exile turning his back on home, attended only by his aged parent sinking into the grave under the weight of years and infirmity ; his beloved Sarai ; and Lot his nephew, who it would seem, was determined to share the fortunes of his pious uncle, and with him to sacrifice every worldly consideration to religion. With Providence for their protector and guide, and the word of God for their encouragement and consolation, they set out in confidence, and arrive at their destined habitation in safety. But God, who had provided for Abram a country, would nevertheless have him carry away from Chaldea, all his honestly acquired property ; for true faith makes light of none of God’s benefits : and worldly prosperity, honourably

ourably acquired, moderately and thankfully enjoyed; is an undoubted mark of God's favour.

Being arrived in Canaan, God appears to Abram again, and informs him that this was the land which he had in view for him ; and renews the declaration, “ Unto thy seed will I give this land.” In these words two things are remarkable. First, a farther delay of the accomplishment of the promise, *I will give* ; and secondly, a transferring of the gift of it, from Abram himself, to his seed. Each of these alone, had been sufficient to have cooled an ordinary ardour, to have discouraged an ordinary spirit. But the good man discovers no symptom of dissatisfaction or disappointment, at either the delay, or the change of destination ; he does not so much as inquire when or how that promised offspring of his was to arise. It is sufficient for him, that he is following the call of Heaven, and that he is blessed with the divine presence through his pilgrimage : with him, even “ hope deferred maketh” not “ the heart sick ;” he finds he is not even now come to his rest, yet repines not. But though he finds no house nor city for himself to dwell in, he finds both leisure and inclination to erect an altar unto God ; “ and there builded he an altar unto the Lord who had appeared unto him.”\* He who has set up his rest in the Almighty, is every where and always at home ; and a truly gracious spirit will never omit a work of piety and mercy, under a pretence of wanting means or opportunity.

Why should we inquire, in what manner God appeared unto Abram ; or how much wiser should we be for knowing it ? Has not the great, the almighty God, resistless power over our bodies and our minds ? And can he not make every element, every creature a vehicle of his will to us ? Behold the patriarch removing from place to place ; “ sojourning in the land of promise as in a strange land,” travelling from Sichem to the plain of Moreh ; from Bethel to Hai ; probably

\* Genesis xii. 7.

probably through fear of the idolatrous Canaanites ; who, we are told, then occupied the land. But though he sojourn, as the wayfaring man, but for a night, the altar is constituted, and the victim is offered up.\* And Abram's altar is not built in the spirit wherein many a sacred edifice has been since reared, and many a pious volume purchased, for shew, not for use ;—having built an altar to Jehovah, “ he called upon the name of Jehovah.”

But a wandering life through Canaan is not the worst of his condition. His faith is put to a new and severe trial ; he is driven out of that land by famine. The country so pompously promised, as a portion to his seed, when increased to the number of the sand upon the sea-shore, refuses subsistence sufficient to his family in its present diminutive state. What then ? Let nature or providence raise what obstacles they may, faith removes or surmounts them. He sits not down suddenly with the peevish prophet, saying, “ I do well to be angry,” but employs sagacity and diligence to discover, and to obtain, the means of relief. He retires to Egypt, which the scarcity had not reached, or which it had afflicted in an inferior degree. Self-preservation is the first law of our nature ; “ and he that provideth not for his own, especially those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

But where, alas, shall we find the faith that never staggered through unbelief ; the confidence in Heaven that never failed ? On his entrance into Egypt, Abram is seized with an unaccountable fit of distrust, altogether unbecoming his character, and equally injurious to God, to Sarai, and to the king of Egypt. He is afraid of trusting the honour of his wife, during a temporary residence in a strange country, to that God, at whose command he had given up his native country and his all. He injures the friend and companion of his youth, in supposing her capable of being allured

\* Genesis xii. 8.

allured by the splendour and flattery of Egypt, to forget her duty to her husband. He affronts a prince whom he knew not, by suspecting him of a base and criminal design against the peace and honour of a stranger, driven into his dominions for relief from famine. He has recourse to the crooked path of cunning and falsehood, when the direct road of fairness and truth would have served his turn much better. Over caution is brother to great rashness. He who wants to shew himself over wise, soon proves himself to be a fool. The very means which Abram has devised for preserving Sarai's chastity, exposed her to danger. As his sister, she might be lawfully addressed by any one ; as his wife, she was considered as sacred to himself ; for the rights of wedlock were held in reverence, even by idolatrous Egyptians. What must have been his feelings when the imposture was detected ? How keen his remorse, to see Pharaoh and his innocent household, plagued for his fault ? The conscious shame of having acted wrong, and of thereby having brought mischief upon another, is, perhaps, the severest punishment an ingenuous mind can suffer.

The next remarkable event of Abram's life is infinitely more honourable for him, and which therefore we pursue with much greater satisfaction. Being safely brought back again to Canaan, he resorts to his former residence between Bethel and Hai, and "pitches his tent by the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first." And there again he renews his communion with Heaven ; for one failing breaks not off the intercourse between God and a good man. Enjoying here a temporary repose, his worldly substance increases fast upon him : for "the blessing of the Lord it maketh rich." But every earthly good thing brings its inconvenience along with it. His brother's son has cast in his lot with Abram, and is cherished by him with singular tenderness and affection : when, behold, the increase of riches becomes an increase of vexation. Though the masters

masters are disposed to peace, the servants cannot agree. “A strife arose between the herdmen of Abram’s cattle and the herdmen of Lot’s cattle:” and what augmented the folly of such a contention, it is remarked, that “the Canaanite and the Perizite dwelled then in the land:” so that their quarrel among themselves, rendered them more vulnerable by the common enemy. For once that riches promote friendship, they ten times engender strife; by setting on fire, envy, or jealousy, or pride, or some such destructive passion. The behaviour of Abram on this occasion, merits particular notice and commendation. “And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen: for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.”\* An hundred sermons preached, or an hundred volumes written, in favour of a peaceable, gentle, yielding, generous, manly spirit, were far short of the plain, and persuasive lesson taught us by this conduct of the patriarch. But it merits a larger place in the history of his life, than is now left for it, in what remains of your time. We willingly, therefore, reserve it, to be drawn out into greater length, and to be pressed more particularly, as an useful and striking example to believers.

Christian, you call yourself a son of faithful Abram: let me see that you are actuated by his spirit. What sacrifice, I beseech you, are you making; what sacrifice have you made, to conscience, to duty, to your christian profession? What worldly interest have you given up? What lust have you mortified? What exercise of humility, of self-denial, of self-government, are you engaged in? Faith in God, and submission to his will, were the leading principles of Abram’s life:

What

\* Gen. xiii. 8, 9.

What are yours? Deal faithfully with God, and with yourselves; and know, that to be a lover of the pleasures, riches or honours of a present world, to the neglect of religion and its joys, is to prefer Ur of the Chaldees, with its impurity, impiety, and idolatry, to the love and worship of the living and true God.

Was the faith of Abram always uniform, his obedience perfect, his conduct irreproachable? No. Then it is not always to be imitated, nor at all to be depended upon. But there is a pattern of faith and obedience, which all may propose as an example, and upon which all may rest as a ground of acceptance with God. When such an one as Abram faulters in his duty, "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall :" let none "be high-minded, but fear :" let us account no danger small, no foe contemptible, no deviation from the path of rectitude a light thing. Let us watch most diligently on our weakest side : and let us learn from the patience, forbearance, and tender mercy of God, when "a brother is overtaken in a fault," to "restore such an one in the spirit of meekness."

Had Abram an altar for God, before he had an habitation for himself? Learn from him, O young man, how to begin the world, as you wish to thrive and prosper in it. The house in which no altar is erected to God, wants both a foundation and a covering.

The family which wants the word and the worship of God, is not yet begun to be furnished. Make room for your Maker and he will settle you in a large place. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things shall be added to you."

Did Abram rule his own spirit, did he meekly recede from his just right, did he gently yield to an inferior, for the sake of peace? Blush, O man, to think of thy pride and selfishness ; of thy positiveness in opinion, thy devotedness to interest, thy insolence in the day of power, thy contempt of the opinions, thy indifference to the feelings and the happiness of others.

Look

Look to Abram, and learn to be a conqueror. “ Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” Look to your Father in heaven, who “ is kind to the evil and unthankful :” “ for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” And thus “ be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

Finally ; Was the word made to Abram, sure ? Has his name become renowned, did his progeny increase, were his seed planted in the promised land, and in him are all the families of the earth blessed ? Then learn to honour God by reposing confidence in him, assured that, “ though heaven and earth pass away, his word shall not pass away.”

The next Lecture will carry on the History of Abram “ the friend of God,” and exhibit the gradually opening discovery of the scheme of redemption by Jesus Christ. The blessing of the Almighty we implore on what is past, and his assistance and blessing on what is to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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# History of Abram.

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## LECTURE XI.

GENESIS XIII. 8.

*And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen: for we be brethren.*

THE history of Abram alone, occupies a larger space in the sacred volume than that of the whole human race from the creation down to his day. Hitherto we have had rather sketches of character, than an exact delineation of the human heart; we have had hints, respecting remote important events, rather than an exact and connected narrative of facts. But the inspired penman has gone into the *detail* of Abram's life, from his being called of God to leave Ur of the Chaldees, to the day of his death; a detail including the space of one hundred years. Moses marks with precision the succession of events which befel him; unfolds his character on a variety of trying and interesting occasions; and discloses the operations of a good mind through the course of a long life, adorned with many virtues and excellencies, yet not exempted from blemish and imperfection.

What renders the scripture history in general, and that of our patriarch in particular, useful and instructive, is, the exhibition of *private* life therein presented to us, and the lessons of wisdom and virtue thereby taught to *ordinary* men. The intrigues of a

court, the operations of a campaign, the consequences of a battle, the schemes of a statesman, the prowess of a hero, and the like, represented skilfully, and adorned with the charms of eloquence, may amuse or dazzle the reader. But the actors being altogether out of our level, and the scenes entirely out of the line of our experience, though pleasure may, no great advantage can, result from acquaintance with them. To perform splendid actions, and to exhibit heroic virtue, is given but to a few ; and opportunities of this kind but seldom occur in the course of one life. Whereas occasions to practise generosity, justice, mercy, and moderation ; to speak truth and shew kindness ; to melt with pity, and glow with affection ; to forbear and to forgive, are administered to us every step we move through the world, and recur more frequently upon us, than even the means of gratifying the common appetites of hunger and thirst. When, therefore, we behold men of like passions with ourselves, placed in situations exactly similar to our own, practising virtues within our reach, and discovering a temper and disposition which, if we please to cultivate, we may easily attain ; then, if we read not with profit as well as with delight, it must be because we want not the power, but the inclination, to improve.

Abram has left his kindred and father's house at God's command. Multitudes do the same thing every day, impelled by ambition, by avarice, by curiosity, by a wandering, restless disposition. Happy is he, who, in removing, does not leave his religion behind him ; and who in the midst of the employments, or the delights of a new situation or place of residence, is not tempted to forget or to forsake the God of his native home, and of his early years. Alas, how often does this very metropolis prove the grave of virtuous sentiments, of religious principles, and a regular education ! Though Abram be but a pilgrim in Canaan, yet he thrives and prospers there.

As

As the pious soul seeks and finds means of intercourse with Heaven in every condition and state of life, so God, who suffers none to lose by fidelity and attachment to him, can render the most untoward, unsettled, and dangerous condition, productive of real happiness ; “ if a man’s ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.”

But never do we find wealth flowing in, and increasing upon a man, without some corresponding peril or inconvenience. Either the mind is corrupted by it ; or the possessor is exposed to be hated, envied, and plundered. The peace of Abram’s family had like to have been disturbed, by a quarrel arising out of its prosperity ; but it was preserved by the good man’s wisdom, moderation, and condescension. The officious zeal of pragmatical servants has well nigh embroiled their peaceable and kindly affectionated masters. “ And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram’s cattle and the herdmen of Lot’s cattle ; and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.” How can any one think of security and peace in this world, when the rashness, malice, folly, or pride of a domestic, may set a man at variance with his chief friends ? Indeed we are vulnerable in exact proportion to the extent of our possessions.

How great is Abram’s mind, how amiable his conduct upon this occasion ! “ And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen ; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee ? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me ; if thou wilt take the left hand, then will I go to the right ; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.”\* Abram was the elder man ; he was to Lot in the room of a father. Him had God distinguished by special marks of his favour, and by the promises of future greatness and pre-eminence. If the one must give way to the other, who would

not instantly pronounce, that undoubtedly Lot ought to yield. Might not the call and destination of God have been warrantably pleaded as a reason why Abram should have the first choice? Abram, no doubt, both might and could have asserted the preference; and he proves that he well deserved it, by giving it up. What person in this assembly but stands reprobated or admonished by the example of the patriarch's humility, moderation, and affability? It is indeed a perfect contrast to that tenaciousness of their opinions, that punctilious adherence to the least iota of their rights, that inflexibility of self-love and self-conceit, that perpetual assumption or demand of preference and superiority, which mark the conduct of most men. Were it necessary to enforce the example of Abram by the precepts of the gospel; the whole spirit of christianity, a multitude of particular injunctions, and above all, the temper and conduct of the great pattern of all that is amiable and excellent, might be adduced, to expose and condemn, if not to cure, that selfish spirit, equally inconsistent with good sense and with religion, which exacts a perpetual sacrifice from others, without discerning the propriety or necessity of making the slightest sacrifice to others in return. Permit me to recite a few passages on the subject. "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another. Be of the same mind one towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all

all men."\* "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves."† "We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me. Now the God of patience and consolation, grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Jesus Christ."‡ Thus have we precept upon precept, pattern upon pattern, on a subject as plain as the light at noon-day, and which is presenting itself to us almost every hour we live. But alas! it is not preaching that can confer the temper of an Abram; and that can induce men to forego the claims which pride and self-conceit are incessantly urging them to advance.

Behold then Abram and his nephew at length constrained to separate. Nature, affection, religion, affliction, had all conspired to unite them; but a flow of worldly success dissolves their union; and the old adage is exemplified in them, "relations sometimes agree best at a distance from one another." The power of chusing was given to Lot, and he exercised it accordingly; "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan: and Lot journeyed east; and they separated themselves the one from the other."§ How wisely this choice was made, we shall have occasion to remark in the sequel of the history.

So good a man, and a relation so kind as Abram, must sensibly have felt this separation from his nearest kinsman.

\* Rom. xii. 3, 4, 5, 10, 16, 18.

† Rom. xv. 1, 2, 3, 5.

‡ Phil. ii. 3.

§ Gen. xiii. 10, 11.

kinsman. But whatever blank was made in his happiness by the failing of this creature comfort, he has the consolation of reflecting, that it was not brought upon him through his own fault; and it is speedily and abundantly compensated by the visions of the Almighty, by the promises of Him that is faithful and true, and by the presence and affection of that Friend, who sticketh closer than a brother. “ And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it: for I will give it unto thee.”\* There is something delightfully soothing to the human heart in the idea of property;—one’s own home, his own field, his own flock. If any thing can add to the satisfaction of this kind of possession, it is the having acquired it honourably, and the capacity of enjoying it with cheerfulness, wisdom, and moderation. Dishonest gain can never bestow contentment, and seldom descends to a remote heir. But the gratification of honest prosperity and success is capable of being still unspeakably heightened and sweetened; namely, by the heart-composing, spirit-elevating consideration, that the blessing enjoyed is the gift of God, is the pledge of paternal love, and the earnest of eternal felicity. In such happy circumstances did our patriarch inhabit the plains of Mamre; blessed in the present, more blessed in the prospects of futurity; blessed in the fulness of this world, more blessed in the favour of God, which is better than life; blessed in the promise of a numerous and prosperous offspring, infinitely more blessed in the promise of that holy seed in whom “ all the families

\* Gen. xiii. 14—17.

lies of the earth are blessed." When we find the good man abiding in tents, a pilgrim and a stranger in Canaan, do we not perceive it written in legible characters, "arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest?" Hear we not the voice of God, saying plainly, "seek ye another country, that is an heavenly one?"

But even the life of a pilgrim, and of a shepherd, is not secure; neither does any worldly condition admit of a certain or long repose. Let a man be ever so peaceably inclined, how easily may he be involved in the feuds of contentious neighbours? This was the case with Abram. In the fourteenth chapter of this sacred book, we have the history of a powerful confederacy of four kings against five; founded no doubt, as all such confederacies are, in a lust of power or wealth; or directed by a spirit of cruelty and revenge. It issues in a bloody conflict in the vale of Siddim. Sodom, where Lot had chosen to dwell, becomes a prey to the conqueror, and he himself is made a prisoner, and his goods are plundered. These facts are related by Moses, and become interesting to us, merely from their connexion with the history of Abram. What, but for this, are *Chedor-laomer*, *Amraphel*, and *Arioch*, to the men of this day, but mere names? Lot must now have grievously felt the consequences of his imprudent choice of a place of residence, had it not been for the friendship and valour of his venerable uncle; who, roused by the intelligence of his nephew's distress and danger, flies instantly to his relief. Behold the good old man exchanging his shepherd's crook for the warrior's spear, and rushing with all the ardour and impetuosity of youth on the insulting victor. Which shall we most admire in this important and interesting transaction, the strength and eagerness of his natural affection; his honest indignation at violence and oppression; the skill with which he planned his enterprise: or the vigour, boldness, and intrepidity with which he executed it; the moderation with which he exercised

exercised his victory ; his disinterestedness in declining any share of the fruits of it for himself ; or his justice and good faith in attending to, and supporting the just right of his allies ? All, all together, constitute an unequivocal and a brilliant proof, of a mind truly noble and dignified : and his conduct on this occasion suggests a crowd of reflections both pleasing and useful.

Remember, christians, it is the same man, who for the sake of peace with a brother gave up his just claim to a junior and inferior ; that was not afraid in the cause of the injured and oppressed, to attack a numerous host, headed by princes, and flushed with victory. With whom then does true magnanimity reside ? Surely with the humble and condescending. The man who has subdued his own spirit is invincible. Behold in this the nature, and the foundation, of true courage. It is not to make light of life ; it is not “ to rush like the horse into battle ; ” it is not to talk high swelling words of vanity : It is to fear God ; it is to be calm and composed in danger ; it is to possess hope beyond the grave ; it is to be superior to the pride, and incapable of the insulting triumph of success. Behold how the kindred graces and virtues delight to reside in unity and harmony, in the bosom of a good man ! Neither good nor bad qualities are to be found solitary in the breast of any one. Is a man pious ? Then he is humble. Is he humble ? Then, meek and condescending. Is he condescending ? Then bold, then just, then generous, then merciful. Is he a child of God, a disciple of Jesus ? Then he is all that is amiable. Behold in Abram, a soul superior to the love of riches, and consequently greater than a king ; “ And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up my hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made

made Abram rich.”\* That integrity is incorruptible which considers life and happiness as consisting not in “the abundance of the things which a man possesseth :” which prizes an honest, though humble independence, above the honours and treasures which princes have to bestow.

Abram, on this occasion, is found in connexion with a most extraordinary person, who bursts upon us like the sun from behind a thick cloud, unveils his splendour for a moment, and then hides himself again in the shades of night : “ Melchizedec, king of Salem, and priest of the most high God ;” whose appearance, history, and character, we could have hardly comprehended, had not a brighter day since arisen, and an inspired apostle unfolded the meaning of what one inspired prophet acted, and another has recorded. The history of Melchizedec, short as it is, with the apostolic comment upon it, will easily furnish materials for a Lecture by itself, and shall not now therefore be anticipated. The story of Abram himself shall for the present stand still, to be resumed and prosecuted in its order : it being now high time to look forward, and to bring that patriarch, with those who went before him, to the feet of Jesus,—his “ offspring ;” yet his “ root :” later than him by almost two thousand years ; yet before him “ of old, even from everlasting ;” receiving existence from him in the order of nature, and by the tenor of the covenant ; yet bestowing existence upon him, as the eternal Word, “ by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made that is made.”

Abram may be first compared to Adam, being both the fathers of many nations, and especially constituted of God for that end. With both, the covenant of God was established, which included and involved their posterity, though the children were not as yet born : for with God, that is effected, which is purposed to be done ; and his promises are gifts already bestowed.

\* Gen. xiv. 21—23.

bestowed. Adam's transgression transmitted evils innumerable to his offspring ; Abram's faith entailed blessings unspeakable upon his family for many generations. Both of them typified Christ in their day ; and both "saw his day afar off." Abram may be compared with the princes and great men of the age in which he lived. And in true dignity of mind, in elevation of spirit, in generosity of sentiment, in propriety of behaviour, he will be found superior to most, and inferior to none. We see kings receiving obligations from him ; while he nobly shews himself above receiving an obligation from any one. And Abram is a type of every real christian giving up the world as a portion, at God's command, and sacrificing the dearest delights of nature to the demands of duty ; living as a stranger upon earth, and looking for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

But the great venerability of Abram's character arises from his relation to Jesus Christ, whom he shadows forth in a great variety of respects. Abram was called and constituted of God, to be the natural head of a great and powerful nation ; Jesus "the first-born among many brethren," to be the spiritual father of the whole vast family of believers. The covenant of God with Abram came in aid to the insufficiency of the first covenant ; which had become weak, and ineffectual to salvation, through the corruption of human nature ; and it prefigured a covenant still more sure and immovable than itself, "established upon better promises," even the sending of "the Son of God, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin ; to condemn sin in the flesh." The prompt obedience of Abram to the call of Heaven, leads us directly to Him, who says of himself, "my meat is to do the will of him who sent me ;" and the language of whose whole life, spirit, sufferings, and death is, "Father, not my will, but thine be done." Abram's appearing on the stage, and entering on the discharge of

of the duties of his public character, in the full maturity of his age, suggests to us, the Saviour of the world entering upon, and discharging his public ministry, in the full vigour of life, and flower of his age. When I behold Abram sojourning in the land of promise as in a strange country, I think of him, who "came to his own and his own received him not;" and meditate on "the Son of Man, who had not where to lay his head." Abram, chased into Egypt by famine, reminds me of Jesus flying into Egypt from the wrath of a jealous and incensed king. Who can read of Abram discomfiting confederate princes, without bethinking himself straight of the triumphs of a Redeemer over "principalities and powers, and the ruler of the darkness of this world :" Satan, sin, and death "cast into the lake of fire?" When we behold Lot brought back from captivity by the kindness and intrepidity of his affectionate kinsman, can we refrain from turning our eyes to our compassionate elder Brother, who "through death has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil ; and delivered them who through fear of death were subject to bondage ;" and who has restored his younger brethren to "the glorious liberty of the sons of God ?" Abram nobly refuses to be made rich by the bounty of the king of Sodom ; thus when the Jews would have taken Christ and made him a king, he withdrew himself : and when the prince of the power of the air presented him with the prospect of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and proffered all to him on condition of his doing homage for them, he rejected the offer with disdain, "get thee behind me, Satan." The amiable qualities of Abram's mind bear a lively resemblance to the spirit that dwelt in our divine Master. But in Abram it was a spirit imparted, in Jesus a spirit inherent ; it was bestowed on the former in measure, on the latter it was poured out without measure ; in the patriarch it was mingled with dross, alloyed by a mixture of hu-

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man imperfection; in the Saviour it was unmixed, unalloyed, for “he did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips.”

But the time would fail to enumerate all the marks of resemblance. Many others will occur to the careful and attentive reader of Abram’s history; these shall for the present suffice from this place. The farther continuation of it shall be suspended, and give way, according to the order of the narration, and to give these exercises all the advantage of variety which their nature will admit, to the singular history of Melchizedec; which, God willing, shall be the subject of the ensuing Lecture, and to which permit me to implore your patient and candid attention. Earnestly praying, that the blessing of the Most High may crown what has been spoken, we ascribe praise to his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

# History of Melchizedec.

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## LECTURE XII.

GENESIS xiv. 18.

*And Melchizedec king of Salem brought forth bread and wine : and he was the priest of the most high God.*

PSALM cx. 4.

*The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedec.*

HEBREWS vi. 20.

— *Jesus, made an high priest forever, after the order of Melchizedec.*

THE eagerness and avidity with which men pry into abstruse and difficult subjects, can be exceeded only by their coldness and indifference to obvious and important truth. The religious controversies which have engaged so much attention, occupied so much time, and furnished employment for so many rare talents ; which have whetted the tempers, and too often the swords of men against each other, are, in general, on points of doctrine too deep and mysterious ever to be fathomed by human understanding, too lofty to be scanned without boldness and presumption, or too trifling to merit regard. Revealed religion, like every thing that is of God, must necessarily present many difficulties to a creature so limited as man. But instead of being rejected on that account, it is the more to be prized and reverenced ; as having this evidence, among many others, of coming from Him, whose

whose nature, whose works, and whose ways, none “can find out unto perfection.” Curiosity, guided by humility, and aiming at useful discovery, is a laudable and useful principle. But curiosity impelled by self-conceit, and resting in mere speculation, is generally rash and presumptuous, often trifling, impertinent, and contemptible. In every branch of knowledge, those truths are the most valuable which are the plainest, and which present themselves in the greatest abundance: just as nature produces in the greatest profusion those commodities which are most useful and necessary to man.

The subject of this night's Lecture, is one of those which have afforded ample employment to critics and commentators. Were our object amusement only, it were easy to entertain you for months to come, with the ingenious, the fanciful, the absurd, and nonsensical expositions which have been given of the person and history of Melchizedec. But as we aim at usefulness, and acknowledge no guide in sacred things but the holy scripture, Moses shall be our only authority and guide in tracing this remarkable story; David and Paul our only interpreters, in the application and use of it.

Abram, with a little band of three hundred and eighteen persons of his own household, and a few friends, has pursued, overtaken, surprised, and discomfited four confederated kings, with their victorious army; and recovered Lot, his brother's son, into liberty. Returning from this honourable, bold, and successful enterprise, he is met by a prince of a very different character from those whom he had conquered, and those whom he had delivered. *They* were sons of violence, sons of blood; *his* name was Melchizedec, and Melchisalem,—king of righteousness, king of peace. It is extremely probable, that these epithets were titles conferred upon this great and good man, as being descriptive of his person and character; and might be designed of Providence as a memorial

memorial to all princes of what they ought to be; lovers, preservers, and promoters of justice, maintainers and conservators of peace.

It is pleasing to find ourselves mistaken in our calculations of the numbers of good men, and in our estimates of the state of religion in the world. For these calculations and estimates through ignorance and contractedness of spirit, are generally, if not always erroneous, by being short of the truth. Who did not conclude, when Abram was called to leave his idolatrous country, that the knowledge and the worship of the true God were entirely confined to his family? When lo! a king and priest of the most high God, of whom we never heard, of whose existence we had formed no conception before, breaks forth upon us all at once; and teaches us this most elevating, this most encouraging truth, that the number of the redeemed is much greater, and the state of religion much more prosperous, than the partial views, and the systematic spirit of even good men, will permit them to believe. Thus, in latter times, a prophet of no less dignity than Elijah, from apparent circumstances, made a most erroneous computation of the number of the faithful in his day. "The children of Israel," faith he, "have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away."\* But what faith the answer of God to him? "I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."† And when the ransomed of the Lord shall at length return together to Zion, they shall be "a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." And what heart but must exult in the prospect of the grace of God being more widely diffused than we apprehend-

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\* 1 Kings xix. 14.

† 1 Kings xix. 18.

ed, and extended to regions unknown, and multitudes unthought of by us?

Though but little be told us of this extraordinary person, that little is both pleasing and instructive. In him, we find united two offices of high dignity and respectability—royalty and the priesthood; the majesty of the one united to the sanctity of the other; Melchizedec, “king of Salem,” was also “the priest of the most high God.” How truly honourable is high station, when supported by the beauty and dignity of holiness, and adorned with unaffected goodness! Is the state of a king either dishonoured or diminished by attendance at the altar of God? No; it is religion that sweetens, and embellishes, and ennobles every condition: it is religion, forming an intimate and a permanent relation between a man and his God, “that raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, and setteth him with princes;” and which exalteth earthly princes to heavenly thrones. Examples are rare in history of these two characters being united. The kingdoms and the priesthood of this world fall to the lot of but a selected few; they hardly blend in one and the same person, seldom meet to crown the same head. But in the new creation of God, in “the kingdom prepared for the heirs of glory from the foundation of the world,” the high lot of Melchizedec is the lot of every child of God. All are “kings and priests unto God, even the Father.” And the apostle Peter, addressing, not the princes and potentates of the earth, but “strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,” thus writes, “Ye are a chosen generation, a *royal priesthood*, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of Him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”\*

Is this king of righteousness and peace venerable in his priestly robes, attending, in the order of his

course,

\* 1 Peter ii. 9.

course, upon the most high God? Is he less amiable and respectable in administering to the necessities of his fellow men? A prince is never more kingly, than when he is practising the virtues of humanity, hospitality, and compassion. And the praise of these too belongs to Melchizedec, for "he brought forth bread and wine" to refresh the patriarch and his little army, after the labour and fatigue of their rapid march and violent conflict. The great God is infinitely above the need of our services. How then can we honour him most, and serve him best? By copying his example; by doing good; by communicating to the comfort of others what he has kindly bestowed upon us. What object does this world present, once to be compared with a human being replete with benevolence, habitually studying to glorify his Creator, by alleviating the distresses, and promoting the happiness of his creatures? This is the true lustre of riches, this is the glory of greatness, this the splendour of power, this the majesty of kings.

Kindred spirits are easily and powerfully attracted to each other; and religion forms the strongest and tenderest bond of union among men. Abram and Melchizedec meet like men long acquainted. The patriarch nobly despairs to accept the spoils proffered to him by the king of Sodom; but joyfully, and with gratitude, embraces the friendship and kindness of the king of Salem. The gifts of a bad man yield a very mixed satisfaction to an honest mind, but it is pleasing to the soul to receive benefits from the wise and good. An interchange of kind offices is the life of friendship in worthy minds. In our commerce with Heaven, benefits flow continually from God to us; continually receiving, we have nothing to send back but the effusions of a thankful heart, and the humble desires of needy dependants; but friendship among men subsists only among equals, and depends on kindnesses mutually given and received. Melchizedec "brings forth bread and wine" to Abram; Abram gives him

“tithes of all.” So early existed in the world that mode of supporting the ministers of religion. A great prince like Melchizedec needed not to minister in holy things for hire, but he would by his example teach mankind, what God by a special constitution established under the law, and afterwards delivered to the world in a general proposition, that “he who serves at the altar should live by the altar.”

But how poor in comparison, is the gift which the patriarch brings to the priest of God, to that which he receives from him. Abram’s is an offering of acknowledgment and respect merely, by which the receiver was neither benefited nor enriched, but Melchizedec’s return to him was a real benefit; he “blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.”\* Abram was already blessed, in growing worldly prosperity, blessed in recent victory over his enemies, blessed in the deliverance he had wrought for his beloved nephew, blessed in possessing the respect and esteem of princes; but blessings like these have fallen to the lot of bad men, and are in themselves unsatisfactory: Melchizedec pronounces a blessing which crowns all the rest, and gives value to them all. “The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow therewith;” Abram is “blessed of the most high God,” with the prospect, though distant, of the Messiah’s day, who should spring from himself, according to the flesh, and in whom “all the families of the earth should be blessed.” Abram beheld in the very person who pronounced the benediction upon him, “the figure of him who was to come,” that “king who should reign in righteousness;” “he saw it, and was glad.” What selfish, solitary joy is once to be named with the pure, benevolent delight, which glowed in the patriarch’s breast, every time the promise was brought to his ear, and the Saviour, his own Saviour, the Saviour of the world, was placed before his eye? “And blessed be

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\* Genesis xiv. 19.

the most high God," continues he, " which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand."\* The blessing which cometh down from heaven, ascends, together with its fruit, to heaven again ; as the precious drops which fall down to water the earth, rise upward in gales of fragrance, from the fruits and flowers which they produce, and perfume the air. " Mercy is twice blessed, it blesseth him that gives, and him that takes." But behold, while Melchizedec yet blesseth Abram, he is out of our sight, and is no more to be found. He burst forth upon us like the sun from behind a thick cloud ; disappeared again as quickly ; and is to be discerned only in that track of glory which he has left behind him. Blessed type of him, who " led out his disciples as far as to Bethany, and he lift up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven :"† And who, " while they beheld, was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight."‡

Thus all the men of ages past have made their escape from us, and we behold them no more : and thus we ourselves are one by one disappearing from among men. Adam, and the great majority, died. Enoch, and one more, were translated without tasting death. The latter end of Melchizedec is concealed from us. But, from his extraordinary character, we are led to imagine, it could not be in the ordinary course of humanity. In so many various ways can God remove and dispose of his creatures ; and thus, through various passages, we enter into the world of spirits : and " mortality is swallowed up of life." What other of the kings of the earth is to be compared with Melchizedec ? Is he not rather raised up of Providence, to reproach, and to condemn the potentates of this world ; the rule of whose government, too often, is not righteousness and law, but humour and caprice ; and the end of it, not to bless

K 2 mankind,

\* Gen. xiv. 20.

† Luke xxiv. 50, 51.

‡ Acts i. 9.

mankind, but to gratify some passion of their own; who instead of preserving the nations in peace, themselves the sons of peace, have incessantly, from the beginning to this unhappy day, involved the wretched human race in scenes of war, and violence, and blood? To which of the earthly thrones shall we look for the union of the sanctity of the priesthood with the majesty of the sovereign? Alas! kings are “set in slippery places.” Their education, their station, their employments, their connexions; all, all unhappily encroach upon the offices of religion; tend to weaken its impressions, and to shut out its consolations.—But there is a Prince, betwixt whom and this king of Salem, the resemblance is so striking, that he who runs may trace it.

Not a few have given in to the opinion, that the wonderful personage represented in this history, under the united character of priest and king, was none other than the Son of God himself, assuming a temporary human form, to exhibit in that dark age of the world, an anticipated view of the person, which he was, in the fulness of time, to assume, of the character which he was to sustain, and of the offices which he was to execute. The expressions which describe Melchizedec, it is alleged, are not applicable to any creature: and as, from several other passages in the books of Moses, it is probable, if not certain, that the Redeemer of the world manifested himself in the patriarchal ages, at sundry times, and on divers occasions, under the character of the *angel* of the Lord; it is apprehended, that this appearance to Abram might be of the same nature; in order to furnish the father of believers with a clearer and more distinct idea of the person of the Redeemer, according to the words of Christ himself, “your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.”\*

I see

\* John viii. 56.

I see no danger that can result, either to faith or morality, from admitting this supposition. And it must be admitted, that there are circumstances, both in the history and in the apostolical application of it, which sufficiently warrant such an interpretation. If there is not an actual identity of persons in Melchizedec and the Messiah, the analogy at least is so obvious, that we have but to bring Moses and Paul together, in order to discover its exactness, and to feel its force. The likeness is presented to us in scripture, not as some others, in scanty and obscure hints, or in some leading features and lineaments only ; but the portraits are drawn, as it were, at full length, by the masterly hands of a prophet and an apostle, and placed side by side for our inspection. In this part of our undertaking, therefore, nothing more is necessary than to transcribe from the page of inspiration.

Scripture is singularly expressive, both in what it speaks of Melchizedec, and in what it conceals ; and in both these respects we may in some measure understand the meaning of what David in spirit says of the Messiah, “ thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedec.” And first,

To whom can the *names* of king of righteousness, king of peace, be applied with such strict propriety, as to him whom God hath “ anointed over his holy hill of Sion,” who reigns in justice and in love : who, righteous himself, has wrought out for all his happy subjects, a justifying righteousness by the merit of his blood, and continues to work out in all, a sanctifying righteousness by the grace and power of his Spirit ?

But *peace* and *righteousness* are not mere external designations of Messiah, our Prince ; names without a meaning, titles without merit, like many of those which are worn by the potentates of this world, *Catholic, Most Christian, Faithful, Imperial, Defender of the Faith!* Appellations calculated to excite pity or derision. No : his titles are of the essence of his nature ; the display of them, is the object of his mission, and

and the consummation of his plan. “ His name shall be called the Prince of *peace*.” “ Of the increase of his government, and *peace*, there shall be no end.” \* “ In Christ Jesus, we, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For, he is our *peace*, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us :” “ He came and preached *peace* to you who were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” † The chastisement of our *peace* was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.” ‡ His gospel is prophesied of, as God’s “ *covenant of peace*,” and “ *the counsel of peace*. ” At his birth the melodious anthem of “ *peace on earth, and good will toward men*,” § ascended from the tongues of ten thousand angels, up to the eternal throne : and when he left the world, this bequest, more precious than the mantle of Elijah, fell from him, and remained behind him to bless mankind, “ *peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you* :” || *peace with God, peace of conscience, peace with all men* ; for, “ *being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*.” \*\* And “ *the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*.” †† Acquaintance with God through him, produces inward tranquillity. “ *Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee*.” ‡‡ And “ *if God be for us, who can be against us?*” “ *The peace of God passeth all understanding*.” The world can neither give it nor take it away. And when his gospel shall have produced its full effect, and his kingdom is finally established ; “ *the work of righteousness shall be peace*;” “ *and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance forever*.” §§

But it were endless to enumerate the passages of scripture, which represent Jesus Christ the Saviour

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\* Isai. ix. 6, 7.

† Eph. ii. 13, 14, 17.

‡ Isai. liii. 5.

§ Luke ii. 14.

|| John xiv. 27.

\*\* Rom. v. 1.

†† Rom. xiv. 17.

‡‡ Job xxii. 21.

§§ Isai. xxxii. 17.

as the author, the purchaser, the giver, the operator of peace, and “the Lord our righteousness.” They are his nature, his name; the burthen of his preaching, of his prayers: they are the fruit of his sufferings and death, the object of his intercession, the operation of his Spirit: they the seeds of glory in his redeemed upon earth; and the perfection of glory in him and in them, when the triumph of his grace shall be completed in heaven.

As the *names* and *titles* ascribed to Melchizedec, apply in full force, and in their utmost extent to our blessed Saviour, so the several *actions* in which we find him engaged, have their exact counterpart in what Jesus *did*, in the exercises of his public ministry. They are these three—“he brought forth bread and wine” to refresh Abram and his weary host; he “blessed Abram;” and he received of him “tithes of all” the spoils.

In the first of these we are led to contemplate the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he exerted, more than once, his almighty power, in miraculously multiplying bread to refresh and sustain the fainting multitudes, who resorted to hear him: and when he instituted, by taking, blessing, and distributing bread and wine, that memorial of his death, which has been in every age, and shall continue to the end of the world, the food of the hungry soul, and a cordial to the faint; the token of a salvation already wrought out and purchased; and the foretaste of a salvation “ready to be revealed;” the communion of imperfect saints, in the church militant, and the eternal bond of union among the spirits of just men made perfect, in the church triumphant.

Again, Melchizedec *blessed* Abram. In this action of the king of Salem, we behold Jesus, “who went about doing good,” and scattered blessings wherever he went. “He took little children into his arms and *blessed* them.” He pronounced a *blessing*, which still rests on “the poor in spirit,” “the meek,” “the merciful,”

merciful," "the pure in heart," "the peace-makers," and those "who hunger and thirst after righteousness."\* He *blessed* the bread before he brake it, and gave it to his disciples: when he ascended up on high, blessings upon blessings flowed from his lips; and in virtue of his intercession at the right hand of the Father, "every good gift, and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights."† If the world has any comfort; if the soul has any hope; if there be any communication between heaven and earth; if there be "good will towards men;" "if there be any consolation in Christ; if any comfort of love; if any fellowship of spirit; if any bowels and mercies;"‡ if there be any joy purer, and more perfect than another, "the *blessing* of the Lord it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow therewith;" it is of him, whom "God having raised up" even "his Son Jesus, sent him to *bless* you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."§ But the grand accomplishment of the type is reserved for that day, when, together with faithful Abraham, all "the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads:"|| when "the Son of man, coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," shall thus welcome his redeemed to the regions of eternal day, "Come ye, *blessed* of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."¶

The last of Melchizedec's *actions* that stands upon record, is his *receiving* the *tithe* of the spoils from Abram. On which subject I think it best to give you the apostle's commentary in his own words. "Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to *take* tithes of the people according to the law,

\* Matt. v. 3, 10.

† James i. 17.

‡ Phil. ii. 1.

§ Acts iii. 26.

|| Isai. xxxv. 10.

¶ Matt. xxv. 34.

law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham : but he whose descent is not counted from them, *received* tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes : but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also who received tithes, payed tithes in Abraham ; for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedec met him.”\* From which he justly infers, that “perfection” could not be “by the Levitical priesthood,” that “there was need” of “another priest, after the order of Melchizedec, and not after the order of Aaron;” who should be “made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life;” and that seeing the law made nothing perfect,” but “the bringing in of a better hope did,” “by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament:” and “this man because he continueth ever hath an unchangeable priesthood.” Through him, therefore, let us offer, “the calves of our lips,” and “present” our “bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service:” for “we are not our own, we are bought with a price;” therefore, “let us glorify God in our body, and in our spirit, which are God’s.”

As the *names* and *employments*, so the *united offices* and dignity of Melchizedec, met in all their lustre in the person of the Son of God : “King of Salem,” and “Priest of the most high God.” In “derision” of the vain attempts of the heathen, and of the impious confederacy of the kings and rulers of the earth, “against the LORD, and against his Anointed,” God declares, “I have set *my King* upon my holy hill of Zion.”† He came not indeed in worldly pomp, but in lowliness and meekness, yet the powers and potentates of the earth were made subject and subservient

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\* Heb. vii. 4—10.

† Psalm ii. 6.

to him. "Wise men from the east" were conducted by a star to Jerusalem, and thence to Bethlehem of Judah, to do homage to him at his birth; and poured "their treasures, gold, frankincense, and myrrh," at his feet. Augustus issued "a decree that all the world should be taxed." What was his motive, what his end? We cannot tell; but we know the end which God had in view by it: namely, to bring into more public notoriety, the several circumstances of Christ's nativity, and to transmit them to the latest posterity, in all their splendour and importance. Thus the haughty master of imperial Rome was constrained of Providence, to render unknown, unintended, involuntary homage to yonder babe in the stable at Bethlehem. "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."\* Is he not then "the blessed and only Potentate; the King of kings, and Lord of lords?" Now especially, exalted as he is, to the "right hand of the Majesty on high. For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him." "And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."† And, into the kingdom of his glory, when finished, "the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour." Then shall angels and men join in this grand celestial chorus, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."‡

But while his exalted rank as a *sovereign* removes us to an awful distance, his milder character as "the Apostle and *High Priest* of our profession," allures us back to his presence, and dissipates our terrors. He is

\* Acts iv. 27, 28.

† Col. i. 16, 17.

‡ Rev. xi. 15.

is “a merciful and a faithful *High Priest*,” an “*High Priest*, touched with the feeling of our infirmities :” “a great *High Priest*, that is passed into the heavens,” through whom we have encouragement to “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”\* He has by “one offering perfected forever them that are sanctified,” and who having “washed us from our sins in his own blood,” shall at length make us “kings and priests unto God and his Father. To him be glory and dominion forever and ever.”†

The circumstances relating to Melchizedec, which are concealed, no less than those which are revealed to us, lead directly to similar circumstances in the person and character of our Lord. “Without father, without mother, without descent; having neither beginning of days, nor end of life :” no predecessor; no successor; no limited time of service; no derived title; a dignity not passing from hand to hand, but permanent, inherent, immutable. Such was the type. What is its antitype? “Who shall declare his generation?”‡ “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”‡ “Verily, verily I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.”§ “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, [and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father] full of grace and truth.”|| “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.”¶ “I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead: and behold, I am alive for evermore, amen.”\*\* “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!”“Slain from the foundation of the world!” The altar which consecratest “the gift,” the priest that presents the sacrifice; the “second temple” which eclipses the glory

\* Heb. iv. 16.

† Rev. i. 6.

‡ John i. 1.

§ John viii. 58.

|| John i. 14.

¶ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

\*\* Rev. i. 11, 18.

glory of the “first.” All, and in all. Every thing pointed to him ; all ended in him, and all are infinite-  
ly exceeded by him.

Rejoice, christians, in this “more sure word of prophecy ;” and “take heed unto it, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”\* Revere the unfathomable depths of the eternal mind. “Secret things belong to God ; but things which are revealed, belong to us, and to our children.” Turn all your inquiries to some good account ; remembering that “the end of the commandment is charity,” is to inspire veneration and love to God, and good will to men. Seek not to be “wise above what is written :” and “be not wise in your own conceit.” In reverence adore an incomprehensible Jehovah, who, by no search is to be “found out unto perfection.” Rejoice in hope of that day, when all mysteries shall be unveiled, and the wisdom, the love and the goodness of God shall shine conspicuously in every creature and every event ; when the honours of a Melchizedec shall be communicated to all and to every one of the myriads of Christ’s redeemed. When, such as is the head, shall all the members be, “kings and priests unto God.” And let us, “by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality.” Amen.

\* 2 Peter i. 19.

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# History of Abram.

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## LECTURE XIII.

GENESIS XV. 17, 18.

*And it came to pass, that when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoaking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram.*

THERE is something awfully pleasant, in tracing the manners and customs of ancient times, and of distant nations; particularly in the celebration of their religious ceremonies. Religion, in every age and nation, has been the foundation of good faith, and of mutual confidence among men. The most solemn conventions, and the most explicit declarations have been considered as imperfect, till the oath of God was interposed, and until the other august sanctions of divine worship ratified and confirmed the transaction. It cannot but be a high gratification to every lover of the holy scriptures, to find in the bible the origin and the model of all the significant religious rites of latter ages and of remoter nations; to find in Moses, the pattern of usages described by a Homer and a Titus Livius, as in general practice among the two most respectable and enlightened nations of antiquity, the Greeks and Romans.

Making of covenants is one of the most frequent and customary transactions in the history of mankind. Controversies and quarrels of every sort issued at length in a covenant between the contending parties. The solemn compacts which have taken place between

God

God and man, are known by the same name ; and have been confirmed by similar forms and ceremonies. The word translated to *make a covenant*, in all the three learned languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin ; that is, according to the uniform application of it in the Old Testament ; and the constant phraseology of the most approved Greek and Roman authors, signifies to *cut*, to separate by cutting asunder, to *strike* down. The word translated *covenant*, in the original Hebrew according as we derive it from one or two words of similar form and sound, signifies either, *a purifier*, that is, a purifying victim ; and the phrase, to *make a covenant* will import, to *kill, strike, cut off, a purifying victim* ; or it may signify a grant of favour, a deed of gift freely bestowed and solemnly ratified by the most high God. And according to this derivation it imports, that the party with whom it is made, is put into a new and happier state.\* Between man and man, it denotes a new arrangement of certain concerns common to both, whereby they are put upon a clearer and surer foundation than they were before. Now the order and form of Abram's sacrifice described in the ninth and tenth verses of this chapter, is a full illustration of the meaning of the words. "And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another : but the birds divided he not." And in the text, "the Lord made a covenant," i. e. he *cut asunder* or *divided* a *purifying victim*. Abram, according to God's command, took an heifer, a she goat, and a ram, each of three years old, slew them ; divided each into equal parts ; placed the separated limbs opposite to each other, leaving a passage between ; passed between the parts himself, according to the custom of the sacrifice ; and when the sun was down, that

\* Taylor's Hebrew Concordance, under the word תְּבִרֵא. 232.

the appearance might be more visible and striking, the *Shechinah*, or visible token of God's presence, passed also between the divided limbs of the victims, as "a smoaking furnace, and a burning lamp;" the final ratification of this new treaty between God and Abram. By this covenant God graciously became bound to give Abram a son of his own loins, who should become the father of a great nation, and the progenitor, after the flesh, of the great Saviour and deliverer of the human race; and Abram on his part, bound himself to a firm reliance upon all God's promises, and a cheerful obedience to all his commands. Such were the awful solemnities of this important transaction. What mysteries were contained in these sacred rites, we pretend not to unfold. They were evidently of divine institution, for God honoured them with his presence, approbation and acceptance. They apparently had been long in use before this period; for Abram, without any particular instruction, prepares and performs the sacrifice; and they certainly continued long in the church of God after this; for we find the practice as far down as the times of Jeremiah, that is about the period of the dissolution of the Jewish monarchy. The passage in this prophet to which we refer, describes so minutely these ancient religious customs, and so strikingly illustrates and supports the history of Abram's covenant and sacrifice, that I trust you will forgive my quoting it at full length. "This is the word that came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, after that the king Zedekiah had made a *covenant* with all the people which were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them. That every man should let his man servant, and every man his maid servant, being an Hebrew, or an Hebrewes, go free, that none should serve himself of them, to wit, of a Jew his brother. Now when all the princes, and all the people which had entered into the *covenant*, heard that every one should let his man servant, and every one his maid servant go free; that none should serve

serve themselves of them any more, then they obeyed, and let them go. But afterwards, they turned, and caused the servants and the hand-maids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for hand-maids. Therefore the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Thus saith the Lord the God of Israel, I made a covenant with your fathers, in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying, At the end of seven years, let ye go every man his brother, an Hebrew which hath been sold unto thee ; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee : but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear. And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour, and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name. But ye turned, and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his hand-maid, whom he had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for hand-maids. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour : behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine, and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, the princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf ; I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life ; and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven,

heaven, and to the beasts of the earth."\* Now the expressions here employed, of "polluting God's name, transgressing his covenant, and not performing it," and the threatened punishment of this violation, "their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth," explain to us in some measure, the meaning of those solemn ceremonies with which covenants were executed. And here surely it is not unlawful to employ the lights which are thrown upon this subject, by the practice of the Gentile nations, and the writings of those who are styled profane authors. From them we learn, that on such occasions the custom was, that the contracting party or parties, having passed between the divided limbs of the sacrifice, and expressed their full assent to the stipulated terms of the agreement or covenant, in solemn words, which were pronounced with an audible voice, imprecated upon themselves a bitter curse, if they ever should violate it. "As I strike down this heifer, or ram, so may God strike me with death, if I transgress my word and oath." "As the limbs of this animal are divided asunder, so may my body be torn in pieces, if I prove perfidious." Permit me to present one instance of many, from the two illustrious nations alluded to. The Greeks and the Trojans, according to Homer, having agreed to determine the great quarrel between them, by the issue of a single combat between the two rivals Menelaus and Paris, the terms being solemnly adjusted and consented to on both sides, the ratification of the covenant is thus described, *Iliad*, lib. III. 338.† "The Grecian prince

\* *Jer. xxxiv. 8—20.*

† It may perhaps be amusing to the reader, to compare the simplicity of a literal prose translation, with the poetical elegance and spirit of the English Homer. The passage follows :

"On either side a sacred herald stands,  
The wine they mix, and on each monarch's hands  
Pour the full-burn ; then draws the Grecian lord  
His cutlass sheath'd beside his pond'rous sword ;

prince drew the sacred knife, cut off a lock of wool from each of the heads of the devoted lambs, which being distributed among the princes of the contending parties, he thus, with hands lifted up, and in a loud voice, prayed ; “ O Father Jove, most glorious, most mighty : O sun, who seest and hearest every thing : ye rivers, thou earth, and ye powers who in the regions below punish the false and perjured, be ye witnesses, and preserve this covenant unviolated.” Then, having repeated the words of the covenant in the audience of all, he cleft asunder the heads of the consecrated lambs, placed their palpitating limbs opposite to each other on the ground, poured sacred wine upon them, and again prayed, or rather imprecated : “ O Jupiter Almighty, most glorious, and ye other immortals ! Whoever shall first transgress his solemn oath, may his brains and those of his children, flow

From the sign'd victims crops the curling hair,  
The heralds part it, and the princes share ;  
Then loudly thus before the attentive bands,  
He calls the gods, and spreads his lifted hands :  
“ O first and greatest Pow'r ! whom all obey,  
“ Who high on Ida's holy mountain sway,  
“ Eternal Jove ! and you bright orb that roll  
“ From east to west, and view from pole to pole,  
“ Thou mother earth ! and all ye living floods !  
“ Infernal furies, and Tartarean gods,  
“ Who rule the dead, and horrid woes prepare  
“ For perjur'd kings, and all who falsely swear !  
“ Hear and be witness. If \_\_\_\_\_.”

“ With that the chief the tender victims flew,  
And in the dust their bleeding bodies threw ;  
The vital spirit issuest at the wound,  
And left the members quiv'ring on the ground.  
From the same urn they drink the mingled wine,  
And add libations to the pow'r's divine ;  
While thus their pray'rs united mount the sky ;  
“ Hear, mighty Jove ! and hear, ye gods on high !  
“ And may their blood, who first the league confound,  
“ Shed like this wine, distain the thirsty ground ;  
“ May all their consorts serve promiscuous lust,  
“ And all their race be scatter'd as the dust !”

flow upon the ground like this wine, and let his wife be divided from him and given to another." Thus when it was agreed to settle the contest for empire between Rome and Alba by the combat of three youths, brothers, on either side; after the interposition of ceremonies similar to those which have been described, the Roman priest who presided, addressed a prayer to Heaven to this effect: "Hear, Father Jupiter, hear, prince of Alba, and ye whole Alban nation. Whatever has been read from that waxen tablet, from first to last, according to the plain meaning of the words, without any reservation whatever, the Roman people engages to stand to, and will not be the first to violate. If with a fraudulent intention, and by an act of the state, they shall first transgress, that very day, O Jupiter, strike the Roman people as I to-day shall strike this hog, and so much the more heavily, as you are more mighty and more powerful than me." And having thus spoken, with a sharp flint, he dashed out the brains of the animal.

Thus in the three most distinguished nations that ever existed, we find the origin of their greatness, in similar ceremonies; empire founded in religion, and good faith secured by the sanction of solemn sacred rights. And is it not pleasing to find the living and true God, as in respect of majesty and dignity, so in priority of time, taking the lead in all that is great and venerable among men? We find Moses, the prince of sacred writers, describing a religious sacrifice performed by Abram one thousand nine hundred and thirteen years before Christ, which the prince of heathen poets so exactly describes as the practice of his own country upwards of one thousand years later; and which the great Roman historian relates as in use among his countrymen, in the time of Tullus Hostilius, the third king of Rome, before Christ about six hundred and sixty-eight years.

The circumstances of this interesting transaction have led me much farther than I intended; I now

return to take up the thread of the narration. Abram having returned from the slaughter of the kings; having achieved the deliverance of Lot his brother's son from captivity; having paid tithes to Melchizedec, the type and representative of the great High Priest over the household of God, perhaps the Son of God himself, thus early exhibited in human nature to the world; having received the blessing from him, and bidden him farewell, retires again to the quietness and privacy of domestic life, humbly confiding in the divine protection, and patiently waiting the accomplishment of the promises. The man who habitually seeks God, is readily and happily found of him. "After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."\* The din of war, and the gratulations of victory, these transitory and perturbed occupations and comforts being over, intercourse with Heaven recommences and improves: the still small voice of divine favour is again heard—"Fear not, I am thy shield." Abram was become the dread of one confederacy of princes, and the envy of another; both of them situations full of danger; but his security is the protection of the Almighty. He scorned to be made rich by the generosity of the king of Sodom; and his magnanimity and disinterestedness are recompensed by the bounty of the great Lord of all; "I am thy exceeding great reward." Why should we curiously inquire after the nature of the heavenly vision, and ask in what manner the word of the Lord came unto him? Know we not the secret, the inexplicable, the irresistible power which God possesses, and exercises over the bodies and over the minds of men? Know we not what it is to blush for our follies, though no eye beholds us; to tremble under the threatenings of a guilty conscience, though no avenger be pursuing; and to enjoy serenity and peace, in the midst of confusion and tempest?

\* Gen. xv. 1.

tempest? Whence is this, but from the word of the Lord within us, constraining or encouraging us to hear?

This renewed declaration of the divine favour, draws from Abram a dutiful yet pathetic expostulation, on the condition of his family and affairs; in which the impatience and fretfulness of the man, mingle with the submission and resignation of the believer. He was grown rich and respected; he had been victorious over his enemies, and become a blessing to his friends; but he is sinking into the vale of years, and his great possessions are ready to descend to a stranger, Eliezer of Damascus, the steward of his household. Is it any wonder to see a proud, unmortified Haman dissatisfied, though basking in the sunshine of royal favour, because one Mordecai sits in the king's gate, when a pious Abram feels uneasy in the enjoyment of all this world could bestow, because one thing was withheld? Alas, what condition of humanity is exempted, for any length of time together, from sorrow and vexation of spirit? How much of the affliction of the remainder of Abram's life, arose from the possession of that blessing, which he now coveted so earnestly! But surely we should do but slender justice to the holy man, in supposing that the sentiments which he expressed upon this occasion were merely the effect of a natural desire of having children of his own body, to whom his large possessions might descend. The man who rejoiced in the prospect of the Saviour's day; the man who was ready, at God's command, to offer up Isaac in sacrifice; the man who had given up every thing nature holds dear, when duty called him to it; and who took the simple promise of God as a full indemnification; such a man must, in charity, be presumed to entertain the most liberal and disinterested views, in thus ardently desiring a son. We hear of no disapprobation expressed against his ardour and impatience; on the contrary, it procures from God a more distinct and decisive

decisive promise of the speedy accomplishment of his wishes—“ And behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.”\* The time, though not the manner of the vision is fully conveyed to us: it was early in the morning, while it was yet dark, for “ he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.”† Scripture allusions to natural objects, are adapted to the ordinary conceptions of mankind. The sun is represented as rising, and sitting, and moving round the earth; and the stars are represented as innumerable, because this is apparently the case, and justified by the ideas and language of all nations, though the fact be philosophically otherwise. Surely the truth of God, in his promise to Abram, is little affected by the astronomical arrangement of the heavenly bodies, which latter ages have devised, and whereby the number of those glorious luminaries is determined to a greater degree of accuracy. What the promise means to give the good man full assurance of, is, that his posterity should be both numerous and illustrious beyond all conception. And, if I may be permitted to hazard a conjecture, and to anticipate an observation on this subject, the error of David, many ages afterwards, in insisting on having the people numbered in his reign, which was one of the most prosperous periods of the Israelitish history, consisted in his attempting to determine what God would have left undetermined. It being an object of much greater importance to a wise and good prince, to see his subjects thriving, numerous, and happy, than to know the exact number over which he reigns; just as it is much more delightful and beneficial to a man, to contemplate the beautiful seeming irregularity of the starry heavens, to lose ourselves, as it were, in their glory and immensity,

and

\* Gen. xv. 4.

† Gen. xv. 5.

and to enjoy their benign influences, than to fix with the utmost exactness and precision, their number, motions, and distances. Accordingly, we find, that in the days of Solomon the son of David, when Jewish splendour and populousness were at their zenith, no attempt was made to discover the number of the people; but in conformity to the obvious intention of God, in the passage now under review, that matter was forever left in a state of glorious uncertainty.

Abram's doubts are now entirely removed; "he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness."\* As God rewards the faithful, not by halves, nor sparingly, nor grudgingly; so all true believers, like faithful Abram, honour God by an entire and unlimited confidence; and believe not only *in* hope but *against* hope. The patriarch thus indulged and encouraged, presumes still farther on the divine goodness, to entreat some present token of the truth and certainty of the promises made to him. "And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it."† Both from what goes before and follows, we must conclude, that this was not a request of diffidence, but of desire and love. We neither desire nor exact from our friends formal obligations to shew us kindness; this would imply a doubt of their attachment; but we dearly love to bear about us the tokens of their affection. In like manner Abram asked for a sign, not that he suspected any thing, but because he loved much. It was taken, as it was meant; and friendship was strengthened by the request and the grant of it. The covenant which ensued, and the ceremonies by which it was ratified, have already been considered. But some farther circumstances here recorded well deserve our notice. The order for the sacrifice was given early in the morning. The former part of the day was employed in preparing it; and we may suppose all things ready by noon. Abram has done what was incumbent upon him; but the great God

\* Gen. xv. 6.

† Gen. xv. 8.

God is not limited to seasons or forms ; Abram must therefore wait and watch—wait till God condescends to appear—watch, that his sacrifice be not plundered or polluted. At length, about the going down of the sun, the approach of Deity is felt. “ And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram : and lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.”\* How insupportable must be the visitations of God’s anger ! (I tremble while I speak) if the visions of his mercy and love are so awful and tremendous ! While he was in this extasy, the principal events that should affect his family for the space of four hundred years, are revealed to him ; and the issue is to be, at the end of that period, the quiet and certain possession of the very land which he then inhabited ; even from the Nile to the Euphrates. But we trespass on your patience too long.

—Let us, in conclusion, raise our thoughts to a new covenant, established on better promises ; to a sacrifice whose “ blood cleaneth from all sin ; ” “ to a new and living way consecrated into the holiest of all, through the veil, the Redeemer’s flesh.” Let us look to that body which was broken upon the cross, the atonement for transgression ; to that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away ;” to that “ kingdom which cannot be moved,” that government and peace, of “ which there shall be no end ;” to that “ great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, which stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands ;” to that day, when “ they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever.”

—Is every discovery of God a mixture of light and darkness, “ a furnace that smoaketh, a lamp that burneth,” “ a pillar of cloud, a pillar of fire ?” Let us rejoice

\* Gen. xv. 12.

joice and walk, and live in that light ; let us revere, adore, and preserve an humble distance from that darkness. Are the visits of God's wrath intolerable to the wicked ; and the approaches of his gracious presence awful even to the good ? Let us, then, think of drawing nigh to him, only through the Son of his love, in whom he is ever well pleased.

Is the covenant on God's part " ordered in all things and sure ?" Are all " the promises " in Christ " yea and amen ?" Is the " glory " they propose and ensure; " yet to be revealed ?" " Be not faithless, but believing ;" " cast all your care upon him, for he car- eth for you." Now we see through a glass darkly ; but then face to face : now I know in part ; but then I shall know even as also I am known." " He who cometh will come and will not tarry." " The grace of our Lord Jesus be with your spirits." Amen.

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# History of Abram.

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## LECTURE XIV.

ISAIAH xxviii. 16.

*He that believeth shall not make haste.*

THE ways of Providence and the workings of the human mind do not always keep pace one with another. In the pursuit of their ends, men are at one time careless and indolent, at another, over eager and hasty ; but God is ever advancing towards his, with a steady, progressive, majestic pace. When we get sight of a favourite object, we grasp at it through possibility and impossibility ; we hurry on to possession, too little scrupulous about the means. To God all things are possible ; and “ he is the rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment : a God of truth and without iniquity ; just and right is he.” Men ignorantly and weakly judge of their Maker by themselves, and foolishly attempt to regulate the divine procedure by their own preconceived opinions of it : “ Behold I thought,” said Naaman the Syrian, “ he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper ;” but God had said, “ Go and wash in Jordan seven times and thou shalt be clean.” It is rare to find a faith which steadily, cheerfully, and constantly walks hand in hand with the purpose and promise of Heaven. We either “ stagger at the promise, through unbelief,” or impatiently strive to bring forward the accomplishment by indirect methods.

When

When we look into history, how unlike do events appear from the form into which they were previously shaped by the fond expectations of the persons concerned ! The Jews in the person of Messiah, looked for a prince who should revive the faded splendour of David's throne ; but the Messiah whom God raised up, established a kingdom " of righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The disciples are dreaming of sitting at their Master's right and left hand, when " the kingdom should be restored to Israel ;" he is sending them forth to " suffer shame for his name."

The sentiment of the prophet which I have now read, as the foundation of another Lecture on the history of Abram, is just and striking. " He that believeth shall not make haste." Faith neither lags behind, nor strives to outrun the word of God. " Thus faith the Lord," is its rule and measure ; it endures, waits, proceeds, acts, refrains, as " seeing him who is invisible." But in the most composed, firmest, and faithfulest of believers, we find the frailties and infirmities of the man frequently predominant ; and a lighter temptation sometimes prevailing, after more severe and difficult trials have been withstood and overcome. Nothing can exceed the solemnity with which God ratified his covenant with Abram, as recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Genesis. Under the sanction of the most awful forms and ceremonies, a son is promised, the future father of a numerous offspring ; and an inheritance is allotted to that chosen seed, by him who has all things in heaven and in earth at his disposal. Abram takes the word of God as a full security ; believes and rejoices. He had now dwelt ten years in Canaan ; and notwithstanding his advanced period of life, we find him discovering nothing like eagerness or impatience ; he " believed" and therefore did " not make haste." But though he was not the first to devise an undue and intemperate method of arriving at the accomplishment of the promise,

we

we find him ready enough to adopt one of this nature when it was suggested to him.

It was now put beyond a doubt that Abram should become a father, but it has not yet been declared explicitly that Sarai shall be a mother. With the anxiety natural to women in her circumstances, however, we may suppose her to hope till she could hope no longer. At length, her feelings as a wife gave way to her concern about her husband's glory and happiness ; and she consents to Abram's having children by another, rather than that he should not have children at all. Projects formed and executed in haste, are generally repented of at leisure ; and when we fly in the face either of nature or of religion, we shall speedily and infallibly find both the one and the other much too powerful for us. Sarai's was a lot to be envied by most women ; beautiful and beloved even to old age ; mistress of an ample fortune, and a numerous train of domestics ; the wife of a prince, and, what is much more, of an amiable and excellent man. But the glory and joy of all these flattering circumstances were marred and diminished by one perverse accident, "she bare Abram no children." Not blindly and capriciously, but in wisdom and in righteousness, the great God apportions to the sons of men good and evil in this life ; that none may be exalted above measure, and that none may sink into dejection and despair. During Abram's sojourn in Egypt, Pharaoh, smitten with Sarai's beauty, had made his court to her, on the presumption of her being a single woman, by the usual modes of attention, and presents numerous and costly, suitable to his rank and the manners of the times ; "sheep, oxen, he-asses, men-servants, maid-servants, she-asses, and camels." Of the female servants probably bestowed upon that occasion, one is now brought particularly into view, and occupies a conspicuous place henceforward in this history. The deception attempted by Abram, in making his wife pass for a sister, is very little to his credit ; and

his accepting presents from Pharaoh, circumstanced as he was and knowing what he did, was far from being an honourable proceeding ; indeed no good could be expected to come of it ; and though God did not, at the time, reproach him for his conduct by a verbal reproof, he is now preparing, by his righteous providence, to make him feel that he had acted wrong. Thus, the monuments of our faults become the instruments of our punishment. Sarai proposes to her husband to assume this Egyptian handmaid, Hagar, as a secondary, or inferior wife ; in hope of building up a family by her, and thus of making the promise to take effect. Unnatural as this may appear, it is far from being without a parallel. The truth is, it is very natural, and very common, to try to get rid of a present pressure, though with the hazard of subjecting ourselves to an heavier burthen. Every thing was wrong here. A shameful distrust of God ; an attempt to introduce a foreign and perhaps an idolatrous mother into the family of Abram ; a most unwise and inconsiderate tampering with her husband's affection ; a foundation laid of probable, if not of certain domestic jealousies and quarrels ; evil done in vain expectation that good may come of it. Abram complies with the suggestion of his wife, and Hagar conceives. It requires not the gift of prophecy to foresee the consequence. Hagar becomes vain and insolent, and Sarai is thoroughly mortified. The handmaid now considers herself as her mistress's equal, if not her superior ; she views Abram's vast possessions, and vaaster prospects, as entailed on her posterity. Little and wicked minds are soon elevated, and as easily depressed. The whole of Sarai's behaviour, is that of a peevish, unreasonable, disappointed woman. The wife scheme was of her own contriving ; and now that she feels the effect of her impetuosity and rashness, she turns the edge of her resentment against her innocent husband ; " And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee : I have given my maid into thy bosom,

bosom, and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes : the Lord judge between me and thee.”\* How weak, wicked, and absurd is all this! Had the good man formed a deliberate design of injuring and insulting her, she could not have employed harsher language; and yet whatever evil has been committed, was her own devising. But the language of passion is ever contradictory and inconsistent. “ My wrong be upon thee.” Why should it? “ My folly recoils upon myself,” would have been the language of truth and justice. She dares not, even in her rage, accuse Abram of incontinency, but reluctantly discerns and acknowledges her own rashness: “ I have given my maid into thy bosom, and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes.” The tide of anger says not it is enough, knows not where to stop: “ The Lord judge between me and thee.” Who would not conclude, from an appeal so solemn, that she has the better cause? And yet, she is appealing to God in a case where she was clearly, consciously in the wrong. I like not hasty references to Heaven. A truly serious spirit will reflect twice before it interposes the name of God on any occasion, and shudder at the thought of employing it upon a false or frivolous one; an angry spirit sticks at nothing. For this reason, I will sooner believe a plain, unprofessing man, on his simple word, than ten thousand common swearers, under the sanction of as many oaths.

See into what disorder one ill advised measure has thrown a happy, well regulated family. Abram’s ill-judged compliance with the precipitate advice of his wife, has embroiled him in contention with herself; it constrains him to connive at her cruel treatment of an unhappy woman, who is at least to be pitied as much as blamed; and renders the prospect of the promised seed a heavy affliction, instead of a blessing. Sarai is betrayed by the eagerness of her spirit, first into

\* Gen. xvi. 5.

into an absurdity ; then into unkindness and undutifulness towards her lord ; then into profanity and impiety towards God ; then by an easy transition, into barbarity towards a wretched slave, who was entirely at her mercy, who had been brought, without any high degree of criminality, into a condition which claims compassion and attention from all ; brought into it by herself too ; and this to the endangering, for ought she knew, of all the hopes of her husband's family, and the greater interests of the human race. Hagar, hapless wretch ! an object of commiseration throughout : led, perhaps reluctantly, to her master's bed, elevated to a transient gleam of hope, exulting in the prosperity of a moment, hurried instantly back, by all the severities which jealousy can inflict, into the horrors of slavery, and driven from visionary prospects of bliss, into scenes of real distress ; ready to perish with the innocent unborn fruit of her womb, in the wilderness, by famine, or the jaws of some ravenous beast ; for "when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face." In what deep and accumulated woe, I say, may one inconsiderate step involve the children of men ! And if good and well-intentioned people suffer thus severely from one act of rashness and imprudence, who but must tremble to think of the fearful consequence of deliberate wickedness ? A thousand volumes written against polygamy, could not lead to a clearer, fuller conclusion, against that practice, than the story under review.

Mark now, how seasonably and suitably God interposes to rectify all this disorder. When we have wearied ourselves with our own devices, and snared ourselves in the works of our own hands, Providence takes up the case, subdues it to its own wife and gracious purposes, and turns evil into good. Hagar flies from the face of her unkind mistress, but happily for her, she cannot flee from God. The interest which Abram now has in her, gives her an interest in the peculiar care and protection of the Almighty.

This

This is the first time we read in scripture of the appearance of an *angel*; and it was to reprove, exhort, and succour an helpless afflicted woman: and thus is mercy ever more ready to come at the call of misery, than justice to pursue the footsteps of guilt. From the whole tenor of the history, we are led to conclude, that this heavenly vision was the uncreated angel, God in the form, and performing the office of a “ministering spirit:” for this angel assumes the name and attributes of God, speaks of Hagar’s present condition, and future prospects, with the knowledge peculiar to Deity; and describes the extraordinary future greatness of the male child with which she was pregnant, as *his own work*. The event demonstrates *whose* the prediction was: and Hagar evidently considered the person who spake with her in this light; for she ascribes to him the incommunicable name *Jehovah*, and adores him as the omniscient, omnipresent God. “And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man’s hand against him, and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me.”\*

A great multitude of striking circumstances press upon us in the careful perusal of these words. Does God condescend to exercise all this care and tenderness about a person so obscure, helpless, and unbefriended as Hagar; then who is beneath his notice, or unimportant in his sight? Are the secondary and subordinate designs of his providence of such extensive and permanent consequence to the world? Then, of what

\* Gen. xvi. 10—13.

what infinite and eternal weight, is his first, great, leading object? If an Ishmael be introduced into the world with so much pomp and solemnity, what must the birth of an Isaac be? And what must it be, when God bringeth his own first-begotten upon the scene, whom all the angels are commanded to worship? How astonishingly awful is that foreknowledge, which discovered before he was born, Ishmael's character; and that power which predetermined and affected the character and state of his posterity to the latest ages, while as yet their progenitor was in his mother's womb? How are all the designs of the Most High, in the course of his adorable providence, and the execution of them, rendered subservient to one glorious purpose, which rises superior to, and absorbs all the rest—the plan of salvation by a Redeemer! How wisely are the children both of the bond woman and of the free, reminded of the lowness and helplessness of their original! “A Syrian ready to perish was my father,” says the one; an Egyptian bond maid ready to perish was my mother, says the other.

What a happy circumstance it was for Hagar to have lived so long in Abram's house! Liberty in Egypt had not proved a blessing so great, as slavery in Canaan. To be exalted to the dignity of a mother to princes! To be introduced to the knowledge of the living and true God! How different are the appearances of providence, considered at the moment, and viewed through the medium of reflection and experience! Under the impulse of sorrow or of joy, we cry out, “all these things are against me,” or “it is good for me to be here;” but when the account comes to be arranged, after the transport is over, we find ourselves necessitated to transfer many articles to the opposite pages, and to state that as favourable, which once we called adverse; and that a misfortune, which once we accounted a blessing.

The history informs us of Hagar's flight, but leaves us to draw our own conclusions respecting her return.

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Indeed, we may now suppose all parties to have been brought a little to themselves. The solitude and dangers of the wilderness, and the apparition of the angel, awful, though in mercy, have, of course, greatly diminished in Hagar's mind the rigour of her mistress's treatment, and she is glad to return to her former habitation. The sudden disappearing of her maid ; the just apprehension of the evil which might have befallen a desperate woman in her delicate situation ; time, serious reflection, and remorse for her cruel and unjust behaviour, must surely have humbled the spirit and mollified the heart of Sarai, and disposed her to receive the returning fugitive, if not with marks of external complaisance, at least with secret and silent satisfaction. And Abram, always wise, and gentle, and good, would now necessarily rejoice in the restored peace of his family ; in this fresh demonstration of the divine tenderness towards himself and all who belonged to him ; in the farther enlargement and extent of the blessing promised ; and in the prospect of the final and full accomplishment of all that the Lord had spoken.

According to the word of the angel, Hagar in due time bears a son to Abram, in the eighty-sixth year of his age, and the eleventh after his departure from Ur of the Chaldees. To preserve forever the memory of the divine interposition, the name given to the child by the angel in the wilderness, is put upon him by his pious father, to whom, no doubt, Hagar had carefully related the whole transaction, *Ishmael*, “God shall hear,” because God heard, pitied, and relieved her affliction. And such was the origin of the father and founder of the Arabian nation ; a people, who in their character and manners, through every period of their history, evince from what root they sprung, and verify the prediction concerning their progenitor, “he will be a wild man, his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him.” And history illustrates the expression of the angel, “and he shall

shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." For whereas the slavery and subjection of all other nations make a considerable part of their history, that of the Arabs is entirely composed of a relation of their conquests, or their independence. They are at present, and have continued through the remotest ages, during the various and successive victorious expeditions of Greeks, Romans, and Tartars, a separate, a free, an independent, and an invincible nation ; a mighty band of illustrious robbers, united among themselves, and formidable to all the world ; inhabiting a vast country of one thousand three hundred miles in length, and one thousand two hundred in breadth—one region of which, from the purity and salubrity of its air, and the fertility of its soil, is deservedly denominated *the happy* ; it produces the finest fruits, spices and perfumes in the world, and is remarkable for breeding the most beautiful and useful animals of their kind, horses, camels, and dromedaries.

We hasten to conclude this Lecture, by adding to the reflections already made, this farther one, that we are not to judge of the greatness and importance of the designs of Providence, by any worldly marks of distinction and preeminence. The posterity of Ishmael was much earlier, and has been much longer established, and existed in a much higher degree of national dignity and consequence, than the posterity of Isaac. But in the line of Isaac, not that of Ishmael, run the promises of life and salvation. To Isaac and not to his elder brother, pertained "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises," and of him "as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever." The things which are highly esteemed among men, are often of no price in the sight of Him, who "hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, weak things to confound the mighty, base things of the world, and

things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.” With Ishmael we have nothing to do, nor with his posterity: they are to us only a wild man and a wild people, inhabiting such a region of the globe. But in Isaac and the fortunes of his family we are deeply interested indeed, as the apostle Paul writing to the Galatians clearly evinceth: and his words shall be the evangelical illustration of the subject. Abraham had two sons; the one by a bond maid, the other by a free woman, but he who was of the bond woman was born after the flesh; but he of the free woman was by promise: which things are an allegory,” (that is, one thing is expressed, and another hinted at or signified) “ for these are the two covenants: the one from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar; for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to,” or is in the same rank with, “ Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, rejoice thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travalest not, for the desolate hath more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise: but as then, he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless, what faith the scripture? Cast out the bond woman and her son; for the son of the bond woman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. So then, brethren, we are children not of the bond woman, but of the free.” \*

Behold the two prime branches of Abram’s family from their birth down to this day, separated, supported, distinguished from the rest of mankind, and from each other, a standing proof of the power and providence

\* Gal. iv. 22—31.

dence of God, and a demonstration of the authenticity of that revelation which we acknowledge as divine, and on which we build all our faith and hope. "Behold, the counsel of the Lord shall stand forever, and the purpose of his heart to a thousand generations." God grant us wisdom to understand and do his will, to the glory of his great name, and our own eternal salvation. Amen.

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# History of Abram.

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## LECTURE XV.

HEBREWS xiii. 2.

*Be not forgetful to entertain strangers ; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

WHEN men are disappointed in their expectations, it is natural for them to become negligent about the performance of their duties. Irritated or grieved at one thing, they grow careless in every thing ; and because another has failed in affection or respect to us, we suffer ourselves to behave unkindly and disrespectfully to others. The effect which mortification, disappointment, or injuries, have upon truly good minds, is, however, the reverse of this ; the vexation or distress they themselves have endured, is the strongest of incentives to prevent, as far as they are able, similar occasion of affliction to their brethren of mankind.

Men stand continually in need of each other, and therefore every man is bound to give his countenance, to shew kindness, and to grant support to every man. We cannot move a single step through the world, without being brought into connexion with strangers, and of course, without having opportunities afforded us of doing or receiving some instance of hospitality. To be careless or unkind in this respect, then, is to be at once unwise, inhuman, and unjust. Christianity has taken into its service every valuable and worthy principle of our nature, and calls the whole catalogue of human virtues its own. As we are continually

tinually reminded, in the course of providence, of our being pilgrims and strangers upon earth, so we are strictly and repeatedly enjoined by the laws of the gospel, to be attentive and kind to strangers. "Be given to hospitality," says Paul. "Use hospitality one to another without grudging," says Peter; and in the words I have read, the apostle recommends the same duty of humanity, "be not forgetful to entertain strangers," which he enforces by a motive which every heart must feel, "for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." It is of this motive, and of the history to which it refers, that we are now to discourse.

After a delay of ten years, the promise of a son is made good to Abram. But as he consulted not God in the means of obtaining that blessing, so God consults not his views and expectations in the character and destination of the son given to him. For it is one thing to be blessed and to prosper in the gifts of Providence, and another to be blessed in the course of the promise, and according to the tenor of the covenant. The seed which the Most High sware that he would raise up, was to prove an universal benefit to mankind; but the son whom Hagar bare was to be "a wild man; whose hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against him:" Abram therefore is apparently as far as ever from his favourite object; and as a farther trial of his faith, perhaps to punish him for deviating from the strict line of his duty, though with an honest intention, thirteen years more are permitted to elapse, and yet no symptom of the expected mercy appears.

At that period, while the improbability, in the course of nature, was daily increasing, Abram is again visited with the visions of the Almighty. Our attendance upon God must be constant and assiduous, and it is equally our interest and our duty to wait upon him; but if he makes himself known to us at all, at whatever season, in whatever manner, it is infinite grace and condescension.

condescension. Jehovah's appointed time is now at length come to enter on the performance of his own work in his own way. The very first word that proceeds from his lips removes every difficulty, though natural obstacles might seem increased : “ I am the Almighty God,”\* or *God all-sufficient*; fear therefore no failure of the covenant on my part, for what truth hath spoken, that shall omnipotence bring to pass: and see that there be no unfaithfulness on thine, “ walk before me, and be thou perfect.” The former declarations concerning a numerous offspring are renewed, and an alteration is made in the patriarch’s name, importing his relation to a multitude of princes and nations who should spring from him. To the eye of nature the title is premature; but faith considers that as done which is promised. Observe Abraham’s posture while God talks with him; “ he fell on his face.”† The presence of the Almighty is the loudest call to humility, and the more any one knows of God, the more he must fear before him. Behold Abraham fallen to the ground, and angels covering their faces with their wings, and tremble thou, O man, before him!

But the trial of Abraham’s faith and obedience is not yet over. God has appeared, not to fulfil the promises under the first covenant, but to enter into a second: and, instead of receiving the long expected son, he is commanded to perform an unpleasant and painful operation upon his own body, and upon all the males of his family. To qualify, however, the bitterness of this prescription, the promise becomes more express, and brings the darling object closer to the eye; it is now declared that Sarai, whose name too was changed, as a witness and token of the event, should bear a son, and that next year should at length crown all his wishes, and evince the truth and faithfulness of God. Abraham acquiesces with gratitude and joy. He had believed and trusted God, when the event was more obscure

\* Gen. xvii. 1.

† Gen. xvii. 3.

obscure and remote, and now that it is more distinctly seen, and brought to the very eve of accomplishment, his heart exults with purer and more sensible delight. This the scripture expresses, by saying, he fell on his face and *laughed*; a circumstance which Providence instantly lays hold of, and perpetuates to every future generation the memory of Abraham's faith on this occasion—the son that should be born, shall by his name, *Isaac*, *he shall laugh*, express that emotion, which his pious, believing father felt, when the will of God was revealed to him. Abraham laughed in faith, and is rewarded every time he beholds his son, or hears his name pronounced, by the approbation of God and his own conscience: Sarah afterwards laughed in incredulity, and was as often reproved for her unbelief.

We hear not Abraham inquiring into the reasons or meaning of God's covenant of *circumcision*; and we will imitate his pious reserve and submission. It was sufficient to him, and be it so to us, that thus God would have it to be. That the great Jehovah should have distinguished the descendants of that family from all the families of the earth, by this token, and continue to the present hour thus to distinguish them, after almost every other badge of difference is obliterated and lost; that the posterity of Abraham should persevere in this practice, through a period so extended, and that no other nation should ever have adopted it as an established rite of their religion, is one of those apparently unimportant circumstances which are ready to escape the hasty eye, but which, in connexion with other proofs, established the truth and certainty of the scripture revelation, and the constant interposition of Divine Providence in the affairs of men, beyond the power of contradiction. Behold then the rite of circumcision is performed; and Abraham sits down in the patient expectation of the appointed hour of merciful visitation.

One day, while he was enjoying the coolness of the shade at his tent door, in the heat of the day, three men, under the appearance of travellers, presented themselves to his view. These were three angels, say some of the Jewish Rabbins, and without hesitation, they furnish us with their names too, *Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael*. A few of the christian fathers, on the other hand, contend that here was a visible representation of the most holy Trinity, exhibited to Abraham as three, addressed and acknowledged by him as one. That something more than created excellence was there, cannot be doubted, after a careful perusal of what Moses has related upon this occasion. But whether the mystery of the Trinity was thus, and then, revealed to the church in the covenant head of it, we presume not to affirm. It is apparent that the patriarch did not, during the former part of the interview, comprehend the nature and quality of his guests, as he neither performs the worship due to the most holy God, nor preserves that awful distance, which even the presence of an angel must inspire; and the apostle, alluding to him in the text, says, he “entertained angels *unawares*,” that is, not knowing he did so.

The scene that follows is a beautiful picture of ancient manners, and wonderfully coincides with the customs of the other nations of remote antiquity, as transmitted to us by their historians and poets, particularly Homer, that careful observer and masterly painter of nature and human life.

Abraham immediately starts from his seat with all the agility of youth, at the sight of the strangers; and with all that glow of affection which is natural to a good man, who had himself known the heart of a stranger, he tenders them every accommodation and refreshment which his simple habitation could afford. Sweetness of temper, easiness of behaviour, and kindness of disposition, are peculiarly engaging in old people, because these qualities do not so frequently

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adorn life's decline. The invitation hospitably given, is cheerfully accepted.

True kindness, which is true politeness, attends to the little wishes and wants of those whom we entertain. Water to wash the feet of the weary traveller is a refreshment, though not so necessary as a morsel of bread to comfort his heart, yet, in a sultry climate especially, not less grateful. We remember slight attentions after we have forgotten great benefits. The proud man makes a feast to gratify himself; the hospitable man, to rivet the bonds of friendship, or cherish the soul of the stranger. What a delightful simplicity runs through the whole story! The fare, "cakes of fine meal, baked upon the hearth" by the hands of Sarah herself; a "calf from the herd," of Abraham's own choosing; butter and milk, the produce of their own pasture; their canopy, the spreading branches of an old tree; their attendants, the man who had in former days put kings and their armies to flight; the subject of their conversation, Abraham's family affairs. Contrast with this the madness of a modern fashionable entertainment; the profusion of far-fetched luxury, the emulation of wealth and pride, the ingenuity employed in contriving and administering incentives to excess, the gibberish of compliment, the restraints of ceremony, the tinsel of false wit, the noise of mirth without joy, to the expulsion of truth and nature; a costly and painful collection, where nothing is wanting, but the very things which constitute a feast, plenty of wholesome fare, unaffected friendship, moderation, good humour, and good sense.

When we are doing our duty, we are in the way of procuring for ourselves gratification; and if there be a virtue which is its own reward, hospitality is that virtue. Abraham now enjoys it to the full. But little does he think what a repast his divine guest is providing for him in return. Sarah, according to the manners of the times, had remained invisible, confining

fining herself to her own separate tent. The angel now inquires concerning her, on purpose to introduce a conversation respecting the object of this visit ; and assuming his proper character of Jehovah, subjoins a direct promise, that within the course of a year from that day, Abraham should have a son by her. Sarah, whom curiosity had drawn towards the door of the tent to listen, overhears this conversation, and not knowing the promise or the power of God, treats it as a thing impossible, and laughs, not in joy but in derision. She is observed, detected, and reproved of Him who is at once faithful, good, and merciful ; holy, just, and severe. But why is Abraham called to answer for the infirmity of his wife ? Was it to render the reproof more pointed to Sarah ? As, indeed, what can be so galling to an ingenuous mind, as to hear an innocent person called in question for our fault ? The criminal now stands discovered, she is dragged from her lurking place, and stands abashed and confounded, to make her defence. Ah how dangerous it is, to have deviated once from the path of rectitude ! How one false step leads to another, and another, and another, till conviction and shame close the scene. The first wrong step here was the indulgence of an idle curiosity, a dangerous if not a sinful principle. People who listen generally hope or fear to hear something about themselves, and it seldom happens that they are entirely gratified with what they hear. The next error was her secret disbelief of a promise so frequently and so solemnly repeated : this is followed by the weakness of thinking to escape the notice of one who beheld her though unseen, and could read her heart, though her person was not in view ; and finally, deliberate falsehood attempts to conceal her preceding faults.

God neither overlooks nor forgets the errors of those, towards whom he has thoughts of love ; and happily the purposes of his grace are not to be defeated by the frowardness and folly of men. Sarah, in spite

spite of her incredulity, shall become the joyful mother of a son, and that son shall be the source of blessings innumerable, unspeakable to mankind. God in his holiness hath sworn it, and “is any thing too hard for the Lord?” The business of this important visit being settled, the strangers rise to depart, and look as if they would go towards Sodom ; and Abraham, not satisfied with having performed one instance of hospitality, follows it up to the last with kindness and attention, “he went with them to bring them on the way.” Two of the three, it would seem, now disappeared, and Abraham is left alone with the third, and from the conversation that ensues, we have no room left to doubt that he was the Son of God, come down to execute the vengeance of Heaven upon the sinful cities of the plain. “And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do ; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him ? For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment ; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me ; and if not, I will know. And the men turned their faces from thence, and toward Sodom : but Abraham stood yet before the Lord.”\* The same person descends to bless Abraham, and to destroy Sodom : thus the same gospel is “a favour of life unto life, and of death unto death, in them that believe, and in them that perish ;” and thus shall the same divine person be revealed in the end of the world, in “flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey

\* Gen. xviii. 17—22.

obey not the gospel," and "to be glorified in his faints, and admired in all them that believe." \*

Abraham having obtained mercy himself, becomes an intercessor for his sinful neighbours. The judgments of God are very awful to a serious mind ; fools only make a mock at sin, and its fearful consequences. But the whole scene is too interesting and instructive to be brought forward in the close of a Lecture, especially as it is necessary, before dismissing you, to make some reflections of a practical tendency from what has been spoken.

—You see, my friends, of what moment the salvation of a lost world is in the sight of God. At how many times, in how many different manners, did God speak of this subject unto the fathers? How many embassies of angels ; how many appearances of the mighty Angel of the covenant himself? As if the great God had been carrying on no design from the beginning, but one, a design of love to guilty fallen men : that one, which of all others guilty fallen men treat with the greatest flight and contempt. What ! shall that purpose and plan which occupied the eternal mind from everlasting ; to mature and execute which the world was created ; which has been declared to man by so many signs in heaven above, and on earth beneath, by the tongues of so many prophets, by so many oracles ; to announce which angels and archangels have descended from their thrones ; and to accomplish which, God was made manifest in the flesh, tabernacled among men, and proclaimed the great salvation—shall it be announced, unfolded, executed in vain ? And will thoughtless inconsiderate creatures, continue to treat it as a thing of nought ? O when shall we cordially enter into the views of God our Maker and Redeemer, and earnestly pursue the same object with him, the salvation of ourselves and others !

God is not sensibly present with us as he was with Abraham, but he is as really so, as if the eye beheld him,

\* 2 Thess. i. 8, 10.

him, and as if we conversed with him face to face. O man, God is in thy heart and conscience ; God is in this place ; in this book : and he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. The visions of the Almighty to Abraham are visits of mercy to you. How easily could he draw aside the veil which conceals him from your eyes, and where we see nothing but empty space, discover to us a marshalled host of “chariots and horsemen of fire.” But he is to be now discerned only by the eye of faith, and we must be satisfied to “see in a glass darkly.” The awful period approaches when the veil shall drop, and we ourselves, disembodied spirits, shall see and feel, and converse with the Father of spirits. Let, “thou God seest me,” O man ! be the leading, commanding idea of thy life, in the city and in the field, in society and in solitude, by night and by day, and when you come to die, you will find you have not far to go ; to be “absent from the body” is to be “present with the Lord.” Is it so pleasant and improving to contemplate the detached fragments of the plan of providence and redemption, which is all we can attain in this state ? What will it be in yonder world of bliss, to be endowed with a capacity of comprehending the whole vast design, and to have the harmony, connexion, and dependence of the several parts revealed to us by Him who is both the author and finisher of it. Eagerly hungering after the fruit of this tree of life, “which grows in the midst of the paradise of God,” this tree of knowledge of good but not of evil, let us be humbly and modestly, but carefully and constantly searching the scriptures, in which alone the way of eternal life is declared, and that life is in the Son of God. And may God give us understanding in all things ; and to his name be praise. Amen.

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# History of Abraham.

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## LECTURE XVI.

JAMES ii. 23.

*And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God.*

OF all the temporal blessings which God in his exuberant goodness hath bestowed upon mankind, one of the greatest, if not the chief, is a sincere and virtuous friend. Into the composition of this character enter all the amiable and excellent qualities which our nature possesses; and in a commerce of virtuous friendship, we find the exertion of the noblest principles, and a display of the worthiest actions. The person who is approved and esteemed of wise and good men, must himself be wise and good. To what a pitch of dignity then is the patriarch Abraham raised? Venerable in possessing the esteem of men; infinitely more venerable, as distinguished by the approbation and friendship of God. Volumes written in his praise, and containing a particular enumeration of his virtues, could not say more than the few words of the apostle which have now been read. All that is necessary, in order to explain them, is to have recourse to his history, to mark his character, to observe his conduct; and on the other hand to trace the dispensations of the Divine Providence towards him, and to attend to the manner in which it pleased God to treat him, in order to learn how this sacred friendship was constituted, and in what it consisted. And, on the

the part of Abraham, we shall find cheerful and prompt obedience, unbounded trust and confidence, profound reverence and fervent love; on the part of God, the most winning condescension, the tenderest affection, the most unshaken constancy. One essential quality of true friendship entered particularly into this, namely, communication of purpose and design. Abraham indeed could have no view or intention but what lay open to the eye of God, as soon as formed within his own breast; but the designs of the Most High could be known to him only as they were revealed.

We are presented with a very remarkable instance of such gracious communication, in the close of that interview, the commencement of which has already passed under review. God having confirmed the faith of Abraham, and reproved the infidelity of Sarah respecting the promised seed, unfolds a farther design he had in this solemn visit to our world. He has come to execute judgment as well as to shew mercy; for "our God is a consuming fire." But the hands of Omnipotence are as it were bound up, till Abraham the friend of God is made acquainted with what is meditating. "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" As afterwards he said to Lot, when he wished to hasten his flight from the midst of destruction, "Escape thither, for I cannot do any thing until thou be come thither."

The character given of Abraham well deserves the attention of every father, of every master. "For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."<sup>\*</sup> The secret divulged under this sacred seal, is God's determination speedily and signally to destroy Sodom, and the neighbouring cities, whose profligacy was arrived to such a height, as suffered not

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\* Gen. xviii. 19.

justice to rest. Whatever thoughtless men may think of sin, it can be no light thing which reaches the eternal throne, calls forth the terrors of Almighty Power, and brings down the Most High from heaven to earth. Abraham, justly alarmed at this intimation, with the sympathy and tenderness natural to a good mind, takes upon him to intercede in behalf of his unhappy neighbours, now placed on the very brink of ruin. A truly gracious spirit is never harsh and unmerciful. The vilest criminal, when delivered up to the punishment he justly merits, excites compassion in the feeling and humane. The persons who themselves most need forgiveness, are generally the most unrelenting, and make lightest of the judgments of God upon others.

Lot, allured by the beauty and fertility of the plain of Sodom, had chosen to fix his residence there, when he parted from his uncle, and is now ready to pay dearly for the imprudence of that choice. When we view an object but in one light, that which strikes us first, and flatters us most, and when we make choice of it for a few more obvious and attractive qualities, we are laying up for ourselves sorrow and remorse in the day when experience has opened our eyes to the discovery of circumstances, unheeded or overlooked before. In Abraham's place an ordinary mind would have enjoyed, at least, a temporary triumph, when Sodom was threatened ; the triumph of sagacity and ease, over rashness, imprudence, and danger. But far different concerns occupy Abraham's breast ; concern about the interests of God's glory, and about precious souls ready to perish. The whole intercessory scene is affecting in a very high degree, and needs no commentary to illustrate its force and beauty. I shall simply read it. " And Abraham drew near and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked ? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city ; wilt thou also destroy, and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein ? That be far from thee ! "

thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, and that the righteous should be as the wicked : that be far from thee : shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ? And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes. And Abraham answered and said, Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes. Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous ; wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five ? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it. And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there : and he said, I will not do it for forty's sake. And he said unto him, Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak : Peradventure there shall be thirty found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there. And he said, Behold, now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord : Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake. And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once : Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake."\*

It was thus that God, and Abraham the friend of God, lived and conversed together ; it was thus this sacred friendship was mutually expressed. The fearful catastrophe that presently ensued, falls not within the design of the present Lecture, which is to trace the history and character of the patriarch Abraham. The next time he is brought into our view, we behold him at an awful distance contemplating that destruction which he could not by entreaty and intercession avert. Dreadful change ! That beautiful plain which had allured the eyes of Lot, in one eventful day converted into a vast smoaking furnace. Cities and their inhabitants swallowed up in a deluge of fire. "The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble."

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Abraham

\* Gen. xviii. 23—32.

Abraham had lived sixteen years in the plain of Mamre ; but now, whether by the particular direction of Heaven, or prompted by a natural desire to withdraw from a neighbourhood rendered unwholesome and unpleasant by the change which had passed upon it, and which incessantly presented such a tremendous monument of divine wrath to his eyes, he removes to the south-west corner of Canaan, between Kadesh and Shur, near the wilderness, and sojourned in the kingdom of Gerar, the country of the Philistines, and which afterwards was by lot assigned to the tribe of Judah. And here again, Abraham, through fear and suspicion, is induced to employ the same deceit which he had practised in Egypt, respecting his relation to Sarah, and thereby runs into the very danger which he meant to avoid. His conduct on this account is undoubtedly very reprehensible. He was to blame for judging so dishonourably of mankind, as to think ill of a people whom he knew not—“ Surely the fear of God is not in this place : and they will slay me for my wife’s sake.”\* Surely the fear of God was not before his own eyes, when he had recourse to a subterfuge so mean, to preserve the honour of his wife, and his own life. He was to blame for employing artifice a second time, after God had extricated him so mercifully from his first error. Had not God said, “ I am thy shield ?” and yet he fears where no fear was. Had not God said, “ walk before me, and be thou perfect ?” and yet he yields to a slight temptation. The very apology which he makes for his conduct, when the truth was brought to light, discovers a mind not perfectly satisfied with itself. “ And yet indeed she is my sister : she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother ; and she became my wife.”† O, how lovely, how majestic is simple truth ! It seeks no retirement, stands in need of no defence, is ever consistent with itself, ever inspires with courage him who practises it.

\* Gen. xx. 11.

† Gen. xx. 12.

it. Falsehood strips the mind of its conscious dignity, keeps a man perpetually in fear, puts invention continually on the rack to prevent the means of detection. But the weakness of man shall not make the purpose of God of none effect. Sarah, now pregnant of the promised seed, is miraculously protected of Heaven, and the truth of God in Abimelech's dream exposes Abraham's waking deception. "Surely, O Lord, the wrath of man shall praise thee."

Abimelech, by the various uncommon circumstances which had affected his family and kingdom, from the time that Abraham had come into it, being fully persuaded that he was a favourite of Heaven, endeavours by presents and courtesy to attach him closely to himself, and prevails with him to accept a habitation in his country. There, it was so determined of Providence, Sarah was delivered of the long expected son of promise. Time creeps or flies to us, according to our hopes or our fears, our sorrows or our joys; but with God, there is no quickness or slowness of progression, no distance of place or time. Our eagerness and impatience cannot accelerate, our reluctance or aversion cannot retard his purpose a single instant of time. The joy of such an event is rather to be imagined than described. The birth of a child is always matter of unutterable satisfaction to the mother at least; what then must have been the solid, the heartfelt joy of Abraham and Sarah, on the birth of a son, the heir of great possessions, the father and founder of a mighty nation, the progenitor, according to the flesh, of the Saviour of the world; given by promise, and raised up by a miracle!

Sarah herself, it would appear, performed the material office of suckling this precious child; neither her high rank, nor abundant affluence, nor advanced period of life, are pleaded to exempt her from this task of nature. According to the custom of the times, Abraham made a great entertainment on the day that Isaac was weaned, when probably he was solemnly

solemnly recognized as Abraham's heir, and by some public act invested with his rights as such. This would naturally excite the envy and displeasure of Ishmael, and produced that insolent or contemptuous behaviour, which our translation renders by the word "mocking," and by which Sarah was so much incensed, that she insisted on the immediate banishment of Hagar and her son. No created joy is either pure and unmixed, or of long continuance. Sarah's comfort is marred by the brutality and insolence of Ishmael to her son, and not improbably by the fear she entertained of one so much advanced in age, stature, and strength, above Isaac, and of such a wild untoward disposition. Abraham's peace is destroyed, and his life embittered by the necessity he is under of driving from his house his own child and the unhappy mother. Whether the good man were criminal or not, in the assumption of Hagar as his concubine, sure I am, first and last, he smarts severely for it. And Isaac, the covenant head and representative of the church, begins at an early period of life indeed, to suffer persecution from the jealousy and malignity of the serpent's issue. Thus, in every state and condition of human life, God sets one thing against another, that we may still and ever be brought to the recollection, that "this is not our rest." We are more surprised at the slender provision with which Hagar and Ishmael are dismissed, than at the dismission itself. That the patriarch, for the sake of peace at home, should consent to part with the bond woman and her son, is very conceivable; but that they should be turned adrift into the wide world, without protection, without attendant, without provision, except so much bread and water as the wretched mother could carry upon her own shoulders; these are circumstances, which, on the usual principles of human conduct, appear altogether strange and unaccountable. But in God, the fatherless and the friendless ever find mercy. Lost in the wilderness, outcast from society, disowned and rejected,

rejected, ready to perish with hunger and thirst, they meet with attention from Him who feeds the ravens, and without whom a sparrow falleth not to the ground.

We may well suppose that Ishmael's expulsion from his father's house and fortunes, and the way of life into which it forced him, would greatly increase his natural ferocity of temper, and contribute to form and fix that character which was given of him by the angel before he was born, "he shall be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." God brings his predictions to pass, not always, nor generally, by miraculous interposition, but by the operation and concurrence of natural causes. "He became an archer," lived by declaring war on the beasts of the field, and gradually brought himself to bear, and even to prefer that way of living, which had at first been obtruded upon him by the strong hand of necessity. So happily is our nature framed, that use at length reconciles the mind to what was in prospect insupportable, and, at first, galling and distressful. Hagar, in resentment probably of the treatment she had met with, in order to widen the breach, and to bar the way to reconciliation, forms a marriage for her son with a woman of her own country: from which we may conclude that they went back headlong into idolatry.

The vexation arising from this domestic dissension has scarcely subsided, when Abraham finds himself embroiled with his host and protector the king of Gerar. The servants of Abimelech take violent possession of a well of water which the servants of Abraham had digged, and the quarrel is taken up by the principals themselves. Such is human nature: such is human life. From the beginning to this day, miserable mortals have been contending and striving, and shedding each other's blood about a well of water, or some such ground of dissension. The whole world is

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a possession too small for ambition and avarice, and selfishness considers that as taken from us which another enjoys. Happily, moderation and good sense prevented this offence from coming to an open rupture. When men are disposed to peace, punctilio is easily overlooked; but where there is a disposition to quarrel, it is easy to magnify the most petty neglect into an affront, and to make an unmeaning look the occasion of a breach. The convention between Abraham and Abimelech is ratified in the most solemn manner, by the making, that is, the *cutting or dividing* of a covenant, according to the form observed on a much more important occasion, and which has been described in a former Lecture: namely, The ratification of the covenant between God and Abraham. But why should covenants, promises, oaths, be necessary in the commerce of human life? Alas! because men are false, treacherous, and perfidious. The awful manners and customs of times that are past, only serve to convince us, that in every age the corruption of man has been so great upon the earth, that ordinary obligations will not bind; that without the sanctions of religion, the sense of honour, regard to the rights of mankind, and the supposed rectitude of human nature, are feeble and ineffectual. No other argument is necessary to prove that our nature is depraved, and that religion is necessary to man, than the necessity to which men have been reduced, in every age and nation, to secure and preserve the interests of truth and justice, by explicit compacts, and solemn appeals to the Deity: by making "an oath for confirmation an end of all strife." Abraham dreads Abimelech as not having the fear of God before his eyes. Abimelech stands in awe of Abraham as under the special protection of Heaven: they agree in one thing, in revering the sanctity of a solemn oath; which being interposed, they both sit down secure and happy; Abimelech rests satisfied that Abraham will do nothing to disturb his family

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or government, or injure his person ; Abraham, that Abimelech will not encroach on the rights of private property, or invade those of conscience.

This transaction seems to have brought our patriarch to a resting place. He is not himself to be a potentate in the earth, but a great prince courts his alliance, and forms a league with him. The possession of Canaan is postponed, but Isaac is born. The son of the bond woman is banished, but the son of the free woman lives in his house, grows, and prospers, and increases in stature, and in favour with God and man. We see the good man now in the serenity of a vigorous, placid old age, enjoying all that this world can bestow on a virtuous mind, united to a wholesome constitution ; unimpaired by intemperance or disease, failing only by the gradual imperceptible decays of nature ; capable of enjoying life to the last. I behold the venerable man planting his oaks in Beersheba, solacing himself with the thought, that though his head was soon to be laid low, his Isaac would in due time repose under their shade. How contemptible is the spirit which considers self only in all that it does ! How I honour the man who lives to the end of life, nay strives to prolong existence, and succeeds in the attempt, by engaging in pursuits through which posterity is to be benefited ! We will now leave him in this happy tranquillity of life ; and may his trees quickly rise to shelter his aged head from the sultry heat of the noon-tide sun ; and be his Isaac a comfort greater than ever parent knew ; and let the tide of benevolence from his honest heart, roll back to its source, increased with overflowing fulness from the ocean of everlasting love. But the grove which he planted was not merely an amusement for old age, or an embellishment of his habitation, it was dedicated to God, and destined as a seat of devotion ; there " he called on the name of the Lord."

We bid him adieu then at this pleasant resting place of life, rejoicing in the past, and calmly waiting the hour

hour of dismission from all his trials and sorrows. But I dread this treacherous tranquillity. Bodes it not an approaching storm? The event will shew. I shall not anticipate, but hasten to conclude this Lecture, with inviting you to a participation in that divine friendship which Abraham enjoyed, and from which none are excluded; for “the secret of the Lord is with all them that fear him, and he sheweth to them his holy covenant.” What is the birth of an Isaac compared to the manifestation of God in the flesh! “To us a Son is born, to us a Saviour is given,” and “in him all the families of the earth are blessed.” Let the history of Abraham teach us how vain it is to expect unmixed happiness in a world of vanity; and to dread the approach of calamity when we possess uncommon ease. Let us adore and admire the wonder-working hand of God, which unseen directs, controls, subdues all creatures and all events to its own purposes. Let us trust in the Lord and do good, and love, and speak, and practise truth. When we see the father of the faithful failing and faltering, let none be high minded but fear, and “let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” Did Providence take Ishmael the outcast, the wild man under its protection? Let poor and virtuous parents take encouragement to cast the care of their helpless offspring on the Father of the fatherless and the Judge of the widow. Did one hasty ill-advised step involve the patriarch in such acute and lasting distress? Ponder, then, O man, the paths of thy feet, and beware of doing evil, in expectation that good may come of it.

By casting your eyes upon the sacred page, you will see what is to form the subject of the next discourse. It is a topic well known, and which has been frequently handled, but it is one of those that will ever please and ever instruct. May God bless what has been spoken. Amen.

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# History of Abraham.

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## LECTURE XVII.

HEBREWS xi. 17, 18, 19.

*By faith Abraham when he was tried offered up Isaac : and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called ; accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead : from whence also he received him in a figure.*

THE parts of history which please and instruct us most, are those which exhibit to us illustrious persons in trying situations, holding fast their integrity, conducting themselves with wisdom, and overcoming great difficulty by patience, and fortitude, and trust in God. The passages of our own lives which we recollect with the greatest satisfaction, and which we find ourselves most disposed to relate to others, are those which, while they passed, were involved in the greatest danger and distress. The memory of past joys is generally insipid and disgusting, but the recollection of the perils which we have escaped, the obstacles which we have surmounted, the miseries which we have endured and overcome, is in truth the chief ingredient in the happiness of our more tranquil days, and the consolation which a life of fatigue, exertion, and calamity, provides for the inactivity, feebleness, and retirement of old age. No man thinks of calling to his own remembrance, or of describing to another, the festivity of an entertainment, a month after it is over ;

ever; but the horrors of a battle or a shipwreck, are thought and talked of with delight, as long as we are capable of thinking or speaking. What a feast was Abraham preparing for his remaining years by the sacrifice he tendered upon Mount Moriah! What a subject of useful meditation, what an example of praise-worthy conduct, has he furnished to mankind to the end of the world! This is one of the peculiarly happy portions of history which at once awaken and interest our feelings; fire the imagination; seize, restrain, exercise, improve the understanding, and powerfully tend to affect and influence the conduct. As a scene in private life, we contemplate it again and again, with new and increasing admiration and delight; as entering into, and connected with the great, the divine plan of providence and redemption, we regard it with religious veneration.

Most men, during the bustling period of human life, amuse themselves with prospects of retreat and tranquillity in its close. And so most probably did Abraham. He had arrived, through much tribulation, at that period when nature wishes for, and expects to find repose. All that a wise and good man could reasonably propose to himself, he had, through the blessing of Heaven, happily attained. Religion crowned his multiplied temporal comforts, and opened the celestial paradise to his view. Isaac, the joy of his joy, the essence of all his other felicities, is born, has grown up, is become amiable, and wise, and good. His eyes have seen the salvation of God, and he is ready to depart in peace whenever the summons comes. But ah, how vain to think of rest till the scene be closed indeed, and death have sealed the weary eyes forever! All the trials which Abraham had hitherto endured, are merely superficial wounds, compared to the keen stroke of that two-edged sword which now pierced him, even "to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." To suffer banishment from his country and friends

friends at the age of seventy-five years; to be driven by famine from the land of promise into a distant country; to have the companion of his youth, and the affectionate partner of all his fortunes, repeatedly forced from him; to have his domestic quiet disturbed, and his life embittered by female jealousy and resentment; to be reduced to the necessity of expelling his elder son from his house, with the slender provision of a little bread and water: these, taken either separately or in connexion, and compared with the usual afflictions to which man is exposed, present us, it must be allowed, with a lot of great severity and hardship, but they are lost in the severity of the greater woe yet behind. For "it came to pass after these things," in addition to all foregoing evils, and apparently to the defeating of the great designs planned by God himself, and in part executed, "that God tried Abraham" in this manner: "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."\*

We mean not to go into the unnecessary criticism which has been employed with perhaps a good intention, to vindicate the divine conduct on this occasion. Surely the infinitely wise God is equal to his own defence. He has transmitted to us this part of his procedure without rendering a reason, without making an apology; and it is presumption, not piety, which shews on every occasion, an eagerness to reason in his behalf. Is it not sufficient at present to say, that men are very incompetent judges of the divine conduct; that a view of the detached parts cannot enable us to form a just and adequate conception of the whole; and that without knowing the ultimate end and design, we must of necessity have a very imperfect idea of the means and instruments employed?

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\* Gen. xxii. 2.

It were easy to declaim on the horrid idea of demanding a human sacrifice, and of employing the hand of a father in a service so unnatural; on the mischief which might arise from an example so dreadful; on the manifest contradiction between this mandate and other laws, both general and special: and perhaps it were as easy to refute all such declamation, and to prove it nugatory and absurd. But let any man, learned or unlearned, read the story throughout, and if he is not both pleased and instructed, he must either be stupid or fastidious in a very high degree.

In what manner the command of Heaven was communicated to Abraham we are not informed. It was unquestionably conveyed with so much clearness and certainty, as left him no possibility of doubting from whom it came. And it again leads us to reflect on the irresistible power which God possesses, and exercises over our bodies and minds, whereby he can communicate himself to us in a thousand ways, of which we are able to form no conception, and against which we should in vain attempt to arm ourselves. It appears to have been in the night season: probably, when as on a former occasion, God had "caused a deep sleep, and a horror of great darkness to fall upon him."

What a knell to the fond paternal heart! Every word in the oracle seems calculated to awaken some painful feeling, and to increase the difficulty of compliance. A person of humanity like Abraham might naturally be supposed to revolt from the idea of a human sacrifice, had the meanest slave of his household been demanded, and had the choice of a victim been left to himself. What then must have been the emotions of his soul, from the moment its darling object was mentioned by the voice of God, till the mandate was completed. "Take now thy son;" this must have at once produced eagerness of attention in a mind ever awake and alive to the welfare and prosperity

perity of Isaac. The tender manner in which God is pleased to describe that favourite child, would undoubtedly excite the most pleasing hope of some new mark of the divine regard to him ; “ take now thy son, thy *only* son, *Isaac*, whom *thou lovest*,”—and invest him with all the honours of the promise, put him in possession of his destined inheritance ? Ah no !—Turn him out a wanderer after his brother Ishmael, with a loaf of bread, and a bottle of water, for his portion ? That had been severe ; but more dreadful still, “ and offer him for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

Abraham hesitates not, argues not. He who before staggered not at the promise, staggers not now at the precept through unbelief. As a proof of his being in earnest, he rises immediately, while it was yet early ; he makes all needful preparation for this heavy journey and costly sacrifice, with the utmost serenity and cheerfulness ; he communicates to no one the order given him, lest the wickedness of others might have shaken his own firmness, or interrupted his progress. Having saddled his ass, for it was in this simple style that the great men of the East, in these better days of the world, used to travel ; having summoned two of his young men to attend and assist in the preparation, having called Isaac, and cleft the wood for the burnt offering, they proceed together from Beersheba for the land of Moriah.

Josephus represents Isaac at this time as in his twenty-fifth year, and describes him, with much appearance of truth, as a young man of singular accomplishments, both of body and of mind. The trial was, without doubt, greatly increased to Abraham by the delay, and the distance of the place of sacrifice. Had the oracle demanded an instant offering, the immediate impression of the heavenly vision would account for the suddenness and dispatch of the execution. But leisure is afforded for reflection ; parental affection has time to strengthen itself ; the powerful

erful pleadings of nature must in their turn be heard ; the oppression of grief, of fatigue, of old age ; the sight, the society, the conversation of Isaac, combine their operation to make him relent, and return. But though nature knows faith, such as Abraham's knows not what it is to relent. With steady steps, and unshaken resolution, he advances to the fatal spot, now first distinguished by the choice of God, for the scene of this wonderful sacrifice ; distinguished in the sequel, as the seat of empire and of religion among Abraham's chosen race ; and, finally, distinguished most of all by a sacrifice infinitely more valuable and important, and of which this of Isaac was but a shadow.

Being arrived at the foot of the mountain, which was pointed out by some sensible token, the servants are left behind, and Abraham, armed with the fire and the knife, and Isaac bearing the wood destined to consume the victim, ascend together. And now, had his faith been capable of failing, could his purpose have changed, the question which Isaac, in the simplicity of his heart, proposed, must have triumphed over his resolution, and decreed the victory to flesh and blood. “ And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father : and he said, Here am I, my son : and he said, Behold the fire and the wood : but where is the lamb for a burnt offering ? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering : so they went both of them together.”\* The heart that feels not this is lost to sensibility. Every endeavour to illustrate or enforce it, were idle as an attempt to perfume the rose, to paint the tulip into richer tints, or to burnish the sun into a brighter lustre.

At length with weary steps they arrive at the place which God had told him of. The mighty secret, which had hitherto laboured in the anxious paternal breast, must at last be disclosed, and “ the lamb for the burnt offering ” must be produced. It is not the sacrifice

\* Gen. xxii. 7, 8.

sacrifice of a bullock or a sheep, which are able to make no resistance ; nor of a child unconscious of its situation ; but of a man, whose consent must be obtained ; and who, either by entreaty, by argument, by speed, or by force, might have delivered himself. The Jewish historian presents us with the dialogue which passed between the father and son on this occasion, striking and pathetic indeed, but far inferior to the beautiful simplicity of Moses. Having built an altar, having laid the wood in order upon it, and made all other necessary preparation, the unhappy father is thus represented as communicating to the devoted victim the will of the Most High : “ O my son, begged of God in a thousand prayers, and at length unexpectedly obtained ; ever since you were born, with what tenderness and solicitude have I brought you up ! proposing to myself no higher felicity than to see you become a man, and to leave you the heir of my possessions. But the God who bestowed you upon me, demands you again. Prepare then to yield the sacrifice with alacrity. I give you up to Him, who at all seasons, and in all situations, has pursued us with loving kindness and tender mercy. You came into the world under the necessity of dying ; and the manner of your death is to be singular and illustrious, presented in sacrifice by your own father to the great Father of all : who, we may presume, considers it as unfit and unbecoming, that you should depart out of this life by disease, in war, or by any other of the usual calamities to which human nature is subject : but who waits to receive your spirit, as it leaves the body, amidst the prayers and vows of your affectionate parent, that he may place it in perfect blessedness with himself. There, you shall still be the consolation and support of my old age, not indeed by your presence and conversation, but bequeathing me, when you depart, the presence and the blessing of the Almighty.” Isaac, the worthy offspring of such a father, cheerfully complies, and piously answers—“ I

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should be unworthy of life, were I capable of shewing reluctance to obey the will of my father and my God. It were enough for me that my earthly parent alone called me to the altar, how much more when my heavenly father re-demands his own."

He accordingly submits to be bound, and to be laid as a victim upon the wood. And now behold a sight from which nature shrinks back, and stands confounded ;—a father lifting up his hand armed with a deadly weapon, to slay his only son. He is already made the sacrifice : for with God intentions are acts ; and he receives his Isaac a second time from the hand that gave him at first. The voice of God is again heard. It is ever welcome to the ear of faith : welcome when it announces heavy tidings, welcome when it demands an Isaac ; and O, how welcome when it brings glad tidings of great joy ; when it says, " Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him ; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me !!"\*

Abraham prophesied without being conscious of it, when he said, " My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering :" for lo, behind " him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns : and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering instead of his son."† We know but in part, and we prophesy in part, but God sees the end from the beginning ; he is the rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment : a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."‡

With what different feelings does the patriarch descend from the mountain ! His Isaac lives, and yet his sacrifice is offered. He came to yield his dearest earthly delight at the call of God, and he goes away enriched with new blessings and fresh promises. Who ever sacrificed to God and was a loser ? " Who ever hardened himself against God and prospered ?"

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\* Gen. xxii. 12.    † Gen. xxii. 13.    ‡ Deut. xxxii. 4.

It is impossible that any one can be so inattentive as not to observe, through the whole of this wonderful history, the mystery of redemption shadowed forth? Is the divine conduct, in this trial of Abraham, dark and inexplicable to human reason? Angels desire to look into the plan of gospel salvation, and are unable to comprehend it. Was Abraham ready at God's command to offer up his only son for a burnt offering? "God himself so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."\* God had pity upon an afflicted earthly father, and a devoted child, and sent his angel to deliver him: but God "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all."† Isaac was *ready* to be slain, Jesus was actually put to death. Isaac cheerfully submitted to the will of Heaven, and offered his throat to the sacrificing knife; and of Jesus it is written in the sacred volume, "Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O God, thy law is within my heart;"‡ "he gave himself for us, a sacrifice of a sweet smelling favour unto God."

Isaac having first typified the Saviour, passes into a type of the elect sinner, bound and stretched upon the altar, in trembling apprehension of the fatal blow. *He* is reprieved by a voice from heaven; and thus, when there was no eye to pity, nor hand to save our sinful devoted race, a voice is heard from the most excellent glory, "deliver from going down to the pit, I have found out a ransom." "I have laid help on one who is mighty to save." Behold the ram caught in the thicket, conducted and detained of Providence, and substituted as a sacrifice in the room of Isaac, and think of Him of whom it is written, "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the in-

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\* John iii. 16.

† Rom. viii. 32.

‡ Psalm xl. 6, 8.

iquity of us all.”\* From the tendered sacrifice of Ifaac arose new prospects and new promises to his family: from the death of Christ sprung up the hope of “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away,” to all them that believe. The substituted sacrifice was of God’s appointment, providing and acceptance, both in the figurative and the real history, and by both we are instructed, that when men have the wisdom to submit to, and follow God their Maker, they may safely commit the issue of all to him.

To view the history of Abraham in detached parts, is to involve ourselves in difficulty and distress,—to read patiently to the end, is the road to light and peace and joy. The prejudiced Jew, and the self-conceited Greek, look at the cross and pronounce it foolishness, or fall over it as a stumbling block; but to them that believe, who wait the issue, who look to the end, “Jesus Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.” Presumptuous men will take upon them to judge of a plan which is not yet executed, and will apply to the narrow and erroneous scale of their own reason and understanding, the infinite and eternal designs of the only wise God. When the fabric of creation was completed, God pronounced all to be very good, and then “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy:” when the plan of redemption is executed, then, and not till then, let men or angels presume to judge of the fitness or unfitness of it. Determine nothing before the time. The Lord, and the day of the Lord, is at hand.

In meditating on this history, may it not be asked—Who among you is with Abraham sacrificing, I do not say, his lawful joys, but his sinful lusts? Who among you is rising up early, and, with a resolute hand, slaying his sloth, his pride, his avarice, his lust, his malignity, before the altar of God? Who among you

\* *Isaiah liii. 5, 6.*

you is rising betimes to “offer unto God thanksgiving;” to contemplate the glories of nature; to adore and admire the wonders of providence; to look into the mystery of redemption, and to meditate with new and increasing delight on that love of Christ which passeth knowledge?”

The little good which we do, we wish to be seen of all men: not like Abraham, who would have his devotion neither witnessed nor interrupted by any one. But glory pursues true goodness notwithstanding its own modesty and humility. Why should I suffer myself to be teased and vexed with the cavils of an unbeliever? Let him start ten thousand objections, if he will, to the frame of nature, the conduct of Providence, or the method of salvation. I will thus simply reply; Do *you* comprehend the whole? Are you of the privy council of Heaven? Can you account for any thing you behold? Do you know to what all these things tend, and in what they are to issue?

Rest, christians, in general, obvious, useful, practical truth; and know that devotedness to God is the essence of religion, and the sum of human happiness. Look forward to that day when light shall arise out of obscurity, when all mysteries shall be unveiled; when the faculties of the human mind shall be strengthened and increased, and the objects contemplated shall be brought nearer the eye, placed in a fairer point of view, and irradiated with a fuller glory; when God shall in the most complete and satisfactory manner vindicate his ways to men.

The next Lecture will conclude the History of Abraham, and the proposed course for this season. If to your former attendance and kind attention, you will indulge me with one audience more, it will increase the affectionate regard of a grateful heart, and afford an opportunity of expressing that gratitude at greater length. May God bless all the means of knowledge, of piety, and of improvement. Amen.

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# History of Abraham.

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## LECTURE XVIII.

HEBREWS xi. 13, 14, 15, 16.

*These all died in faith, not having received the promises ; but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned : but now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly : wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God ; for he hath prepared for them a city.*

WHAT is the amount of human life ? Vanity and vexation of spirit. All our wanderings tend towards the grave. The anxieties and solicitude, the hopes and fears, the disappointments and successes which alternately occupy and agitate the mind, at length come to one issue, and all-conquering death settles the account. The time is at length come that Sarah must pay the debt of nature. That beauty which conjugal affection doated on, and which princes coveted, becomes deformed with wrinkles ; the cold hand of death chills the fond maternal heart, and even the delight of an Isaac is enjoyed no more. The Jewish Rabbins, fruitful in legends, affirm, that grief for the sacrifice of Isaac shortened her life. For that the devil, who had exulted in the prospect of seeing Isaac perish

perish by the knife of his father, to revenge himself for the disappointment which he felt upon his deliverance by the angel, conveyed intelligence to Sarah that the sacrifice was actually performed ; which news speedily proved fatal to her. As if the oppressive weight of one hundred and twenty-seven years did not sufficiently account for the death of a frail woman, without the necessity of a preternatural interpolation.

Affecting change ! The eyes of Abraham himself cannot now endure to look upon her, whom once he shuddered to think that the eyes of another should behold with too much desire ; and he is now as eager to bury her out of his sight, as he formerly was to retain the possession of her wholly to himself. Let the beautiful and the vain, the gay, the admired, and the flattered, think of this and be humbled. The latter-end of her life, however, is better than the beginning. Tormented with the unaccomplished desire of having children, subjected to all the hardships of a pilgrimage state, and stung with the keen pangs of jealousy, almost up to her ninetieth year, life at length subsides into a delightful calm of thirty-seven years more, cheered and cherished by the unabated affection of her beloved lord, and blessed with the progress and accomplishments of the son of her womb, Isaac, the favourite of God and man. But she must finally make one remove more ; not to that country from which she came out, but to that land “ from whose bourne no traveller returns.” A partaker as of the fortunes, so of the faith of Abraham, she sees the promises afar off, is persuaded of them and embraces them ; desires and looks for another country, that is, an heavenly.

God had promised to Abraham and his seed the possession of Canaan, and lo, it commences in the purchase, at their full value, of a little field and a cave, for a burying place. He had been threatened with a severe stroke in the demanded sacrifice of Isaac, he is made to feel one in the loss of Sarah. The mellowed friendship

friendship of so many years, and union cemented at last by so dear a pledge, could not be dissolved without pain. Abraham is sensible of his loss, and bewails it. His religion is not of that sort which values itself on doing violence to nature ; he knows nothing of that vain philosophy which affects to deny what it feels : neither has an old age of one hundred and thirty-seven years extinguished in the heart those tender emotions, which the deprivation of an object, once fair, and ever dear, naturally excites. He who does not weep on such an occasion as this, is something more or less than a man. But to persevere in bewailing the dead, to the neglect of our duty to the living, is both folly and impiety. Abraham's sorrow encroaches upon none of the valuable principles of a good mind. His whole conduct in the purchase of the field of Ephron the Hittite, and the cave of Machpelah, exhibits a soul replete with the most amiable and respectable virtues. Tender and affectionate, he is desirous of honouring in death the remains of what he prized in life. Noble-minded, generous, and independent, he refuses to shew respect to the memory of Sarah with that which cost him nothing. Civil and polite, he repays the courtesy of his neighbours with affability and condescension. Scrupulously just and honest, he will give nothing less than the full price, and in full tale, weight, and purity, for what was frankly tendered him as a gift. The dialogue of the twenty-third chapter is a masterly picture of the beautiful simplicity of ancient manners, and exhibits a strife of unaffected kindness, good-nature, and civility, which at once pleases and instructs. Let me beseech you to peruse it carefully when opportunity offers. Would to God such contentions were more frequent in the world. The purchase is made, the price is paid, possession is made sure, and then was Sarah buried. And thus, first, Abraham became seized of the land of promise. So differently does Providence shape events from our preconception of them.

It

It is worthy of observation, that this is the first *money* transaction which we read of in the world. Till then, and long after, both among the posterity of Abraham and other nations, wealth was estimated by the number and quality of cattle; and cattle were the principal instruments of commerce. Thus we read in many places of Homer, of a coat of mail worth an hundred oxen; a caldron worth twenty sheep; a cup or goblet worth twelve lambs; and the like. The words belonging to commerce or exchange of commodities, in the Greek language, are mostly derived from the names of certain animals, by means of which that exchange was originally carried on. Thus the word itself which signifies to *truck* or *commute* one kind of goods for another, is derived from that which signifies a *lamb*; \* the verb which is translated *to sell*, comes from the noun, which translated signifies a *colt* or young horse; † the Greek word, which in our language is *to buy*, comes from that which signifies *an ass*: ‡ the term that denotes *rent* or *revenue*, and that which signifies a *sheep*, are of kindred composition and import. § A criminal, according to the magnitude of his guilt, was condemned to pay a fine of four, twelve, or an hundred oxen. || A *wealthy person* is called a man of *many lambs*. ¶ Two rival brothers are represented in Hesiod, as fighting with each other about the *sheep* of their father; that is, contending who should be his heir. But even so early as the time of Abraham, we find silver employed as a more commodious mean of traffic; and the concurrence of all civilized and commercial nations to this day, in employing the precious metals for this purpose, is a proof how early men learned the wisdom of this world; and discovers to us, how readily they invent, how accurately they reason, and how prudently they act,

\* αρνισθαι from αρνος.      † πωλειν from πωλος.      ‡ ωνεισθαι from ονος.      § Προβιατις and Προβιτον.      || Τιμηρις τεσ-  
σαριστον, διδεκατον, εκατομβοιον.      ¶ πολυαρνος.

act, in matters that are conducive to their temporal interest and advantage. But to return—

By the death of Sarah, the care and anxiety about the dear object of their common affection becomes naturally much increased to the surviving parent. Isaac was now arrived at man's estate, and it is fit that the heir of the promise should be established in a family of his own. For how are the promises of God brought into effect, but by the intervention of the means which nature and providence have appointed? Abraham, with the solicitude of a good father, is desirous of matching his son, rather prudently and piously, than nobly or wealthily. In these days of simplicity and nature, the partner for life was sought after, not for the largeness of her possessions; but gold, and silver, and jewels, were employed to court beauty and virtue to their proper sphere of importance and usefulness in life. Abraham judges it unwise to marry his son into a Hittite family, because they had deviated from the worship of the true God. He could esteem their hospitality, kindness, and civility, as they deserved, without falling in love with their religion. And he who cannot make this distinction must either be unfaithful to God, or unfriendly to man. Affecting view of the corruption and degeneracy of human nature! that Isaac, the son of faithful Abraham, should be deemed in greater danger of being perverted by an idolatrous wife, than that a woman of Canaan should be converted to the worship of the living and true God, by a believing husband.

Isaac, it would appear, devoted to retirement and contemplation, little attached himself to the concerns of this life; the management of his affairs and his settlement in the world, he leaves to the wisdom of his father, and the fidelity of an ancient domestic. The journey of that servant into Mesopotamia, and the success of it, belong more properly to the history of Isaac. As far as Abraham is concerned in it, we behold a holy man acknowledging God in all his ways,

ways, and making the ordinary concerns of life a religious service : and we see God, in return, directing every step to a happy issue.

Having seen his beloved son settled entirely to his satisfaction, he enters again himself into the honourable state of marriage, and is blessed in it by a progeny of six sons and ten grand-children born in his lifetime. In order to prevent strife after his death, as far as human sagacity and foresight could do it, and knowing that property is the great source of contention among men, he settles his worldly affairs, bequeathing the great bulk of his fortune to Isaac, the son of his first and principal wife ; following in this the destination of Providence, and fulfilling the condition of the covenant under which Rebekah was induced to become Isaac's wife. He makes a suitable provision for the younger branches of his family, and sends them, by dint of his paternal authority, into a distant part of the country, while he yet lived, that the quiet and peaceable temper of Isaac might not be exposed to disturbance and trouble, from the neighbourhood of ambitious, violent, or avaricious brothers, after his death.

That fatal period at length overtakes him also, and he comes to the grave, "like as a shock of corn cometh in his season," in a good old age, "an old man, and full of years," at the age of one hundred three-score and fifteen. A life shorter by far than any we have hitherto studied, but much fuller of incidents and events. A life chequered with uncommon trials, and blessings as extraordinary. A life distinguished by the most brilliant virtues which adorn human nature, but not wholly exempted from its frailties and infirmities. Abraham purchased a grave for Sarah. Alas ! he was only providing a habitation for himself ! How short, how unimportant the distance between the funeral rites which we prepare, and those which are prepared for us !

But can this be all that God intended to baffle upon our patriarch by promises so lofty, conveyed in language

language so solemn ? Was it for this he was called to leave his country and his father's house ? Did vision upon vision, covenant upon covenant, promise upon promise, conduct only to a little cave in Hebron ? Was the favour of the almighty, the all-bountiful Jehovah, expressed to the man whom he dignified by the title of his friend, only by such things as are the common gifts of his providence to all, and which are often bestowed on the vilest and most worthless of mankind ? If the grave were to terminate the existence of man, such questions would be indeed of difficult solution. But the difficulty of them scatters and disperses before one word of God, spoken three hundred and thirty years after the patriarch's death, even to Moses at the bush in Horeb. *I am the God of Abraham.* His relation to God was as entire three centuries after his body was consumed in dust in Machpelah, as when he was entertaining angels in Mamre, or sacrificing upon Mount Moriah. “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” To Him, and for Him, and with Him, now live the faithful of all past ages ; and precious is their very dust in his sight. Judge nothing then before the time, till the day come which shall unfold the purpose of Heaven, which shall clear up the mystery of providence, and fully vindicate the ways of God to man.

It appears that some intercourse between Ishmael and his father's family had been kept up ; for we find him apprized of Abraham's death, and assisting at his funeral. He must be a wild man indeed, not to have been tamed, at least into a temporary sorrow, by such an event, and melted into forgetfulness of all past resentments, by the death of a father. Providence wisely produces this good effect, by the common calamities wherewith families are visited ; they tend to reconcile the alienated, they extinguish bitterness and strife, they re-kindle the dying embers of filial duty and brotherly love. Isaac and Ishmael, men of different natures, of opposite interests, rivals from the womb, forget all animosity, and mingle tears over a <sup>c</sup>ther's tomb.

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It remains, in conformity to our plan, that we point out in a few particulars, the resemblance betwixt Abraham and Christ, that we may see wherein the former typified the latter.

Abraham, at God's command, leaving his country, and his father's house, points to us obviously, Jesus, at the fulness of time, leaving heaven's glory and the bosom of the Father, and coming into our world and living a pilgrim and a stranger in it. Abraham, in a land which was his own by the gift and promise of God, nevertheless obtained no fixed residence in it, but wandered about from place to place ; Jesus, in a world which he made and upholds, which is *his* by the most undenial title, was without a place where to lay his head. Abraham was called the friend of God, and to him God communicated his purposes of mercy and of judgment ; Jesus, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, and knows intimately the mind of the Lord, he hath declared him. With Abraham God established the political covenants which secured to him and his family the possession of Canaan, and all the temporal and spiritual blessings of a transitory and preparatory economy ; Jesus is the Mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises ; even the covenant of redemption, whereby the kingdom of heaven, and eternal life, are made sure to all his spiritual seed ; for thus it is written of him, “I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations ;” and “according to his abundant mercy he hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” In Abraham we venerate the natural head of a great family, raised up, multiplied, preserved and distinguished by the hand of Providence to this day. Of Christ, “the whole family of heaven,” and all the families of the earth “are named,”

“and

"and he is before all things and by him all things consist." Abraham stands forth the typical representative, father, and pattern of believers; Christ is "the head of the body, the church," the real source of a spiritual and divine life to all them who believe.

Abraham's intercession in behalf of Sodom, and Christ's lamentation over Jerusalem, are a beautiful and striking counterpart to each other. The sacrifices which Abraham and Christ respectively offered up unto God, wonderfully illustrate and explain one another.

But in the midst of so many marks of resemblance, who does not by a glance discern as many characters of dissimilitude; and an infinite superiority claimed by Him who "in all things must have the pre-eminence?" Who shall declare his generation, who faith of himself "before Abraham was, I am?" Abraham was a man of like passions with us, and even the father of the faithful stumbled and fell; Jesus was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," and the prince of this world himself, when he came, found nothing in him. Abraham was ready to offer up Isaac; Christ actually offered himself "a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto God." The faith of Abraham could not redeem him from death; the power of Christ triumphed over the grave. The first covenants, being of a temporary nature, having fulfilled their design, are passed away. The New Testament in the blood of Christ being for everlasting, continues in full force, and shall last while sun and moon endure, nay, when "all these things shall be dissolved."

Being arrived at one of the great epochs in the history of the world, we shall just for a moment look back, and mark the link which connected this period with the flood, and even with the antediluvian world; giving you only names and dates for the sake of brevity. SHEM the second son of Noah, and father of Arphaxad and of all the children of Heber, to whom

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the family jewel, that is, the promise of the Messiah, was committed, who saw two of the great calamities of the world and outlived them, the deluge, and the confusion of languages, and who lived no doubt to see and rejoice in Abraham and Isaac as the heirs of the promise ; Shem, I say, is the great link of these two eras of the world. For, he lived before the flood ninety-eight years, and after it five hundred and two ; of consequence he died only twenty-five years before Abraham. His life accordingly may be calculated thus, with regard to the great persons and events with which he was connected. Before the flood he lived ninety-eight years. After the birth of his own son Arphaxad five hundred. After the death of Arphaxad sixty-one. After the death of Noah one hundred and fifty-two. After the confusion of tongues three hundred and forty-eight. After the death of Sarah thirteen. Before the birth of Jacob ten. Before the birth of Moses two hundred and seventy-five. When Abraham was one hundred and fifty years old, Isaac fifty, and before the descent into Egypt one hundred and forty. The chronology of Abraham's life, according to the scripture account, stands thus. He died in the one hundred and seventy-fifth year of his age, and of the world two thousand one hundred and eighty-three. Before the birth of Christ one thousand eight hundred and twenty-one. After he discomfited and slew Chedelaomer and the other kings ninety-one. After the intended sacrifice of Isaac fifty. After the death of Sarah thirty-eight. After his marriage with Keturah thirty-five. After the death of Shem twenty-five. Before the descent into Egypt one hundred and fifteen. When Isaac was seventy-five years old ; Esau and Jacob fifteen ; Ishmael eighty-nine, and Heber his great grandfather, from whom the name of Hebrew comes, four hundred and sixty. “ By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise,” and when he gave up the ghost, was buried

buried in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, by his sons Isaac and Ishmael.

And thus, my dear friends, we have, through the help of God, finished the first part of the plan of these Lectures. And the season of interruption and separation being now come, permit me, with a heart overflowing with affection and gratitude, to return you my sincere thanks, for your regular attendance and patient attention. You were invited hither with much humility and diffidence ; you have come hither with much alacrity and steadiness, and you must not depart hence, without bearing along with you the grateful acknowledgments of the Lecturer. He has the consolation of believing, that as neither he, nor his undertaking, are the creatures of party, or of human system, nor aim at any interests but those of virtue, good sense, and religion ; so they have been encouraged by wise and good men of various sects and denominations. He humbly hopes he has interfered with the happiness, fame or usefulness of no good man whatever. If he has led any one to read the bible more carefully, to trace the connexion betwixt the Old and New Testament characters, institutions, and events, more accurately ; to trace the ways of Providence more closely ; or to feel the powers of a world to come sensibly, verily he has his reward.

But he affects not fastidiously to undervalue some considerations of inferior importance : he dwells with secret delight on the disinterested attachment and generous services of his private friends : his heart glows at the public marks of regard he has received ; and the temporal emolument arising from his labours he receives with much thankfulness to you, and to that kind Providence, which is pleased to smile upon another effort to rear up a numerous family. May the kindness you have shewn the preacher return a thousand fold upon your own heads. The God of love be with you all. Amen.

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THE LITERATURE OF THE AMERICAS

and the world's most popular book, the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which has sold millions of copies all over the world. The author of the book, Mark Twain, was born in 1835 in a small town in Missouri. He grew up poor and had to work at various jobs to support himself. He became a riverboat pilot and later a reporter for a newspaper. He traveled around the country and wrote about his experiences in his books. His most famous book, *Huckleberry Finn*, is a story about a boy named Huck who runs away from home and goes down the Mississippi River with a runaway slave named Jim. The book is full of humor and adventure and has been translated into many languages. It is still one of the most popular books in the world.

Another well-known American writer is Ernest Hemingway, who was born in 1899 in Illinois. He was a soldier during World War I and was wounded in battle. After the war, he became a reporter for a newspaper in Paris, France. He also wrote novels and short stories, including *A Farewell to Arms* and *The Old Man and the Sea*. His writing style is known for its spare, direct language and focus on the human experience. He won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954. Other famous American writers include William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams, and F. Scott Fitzgerald, whose works have had a significant influence on literature around the world.





her chair

or her desk

~~and his steps~~

in his bedroom

or to go with him

or to go with him



